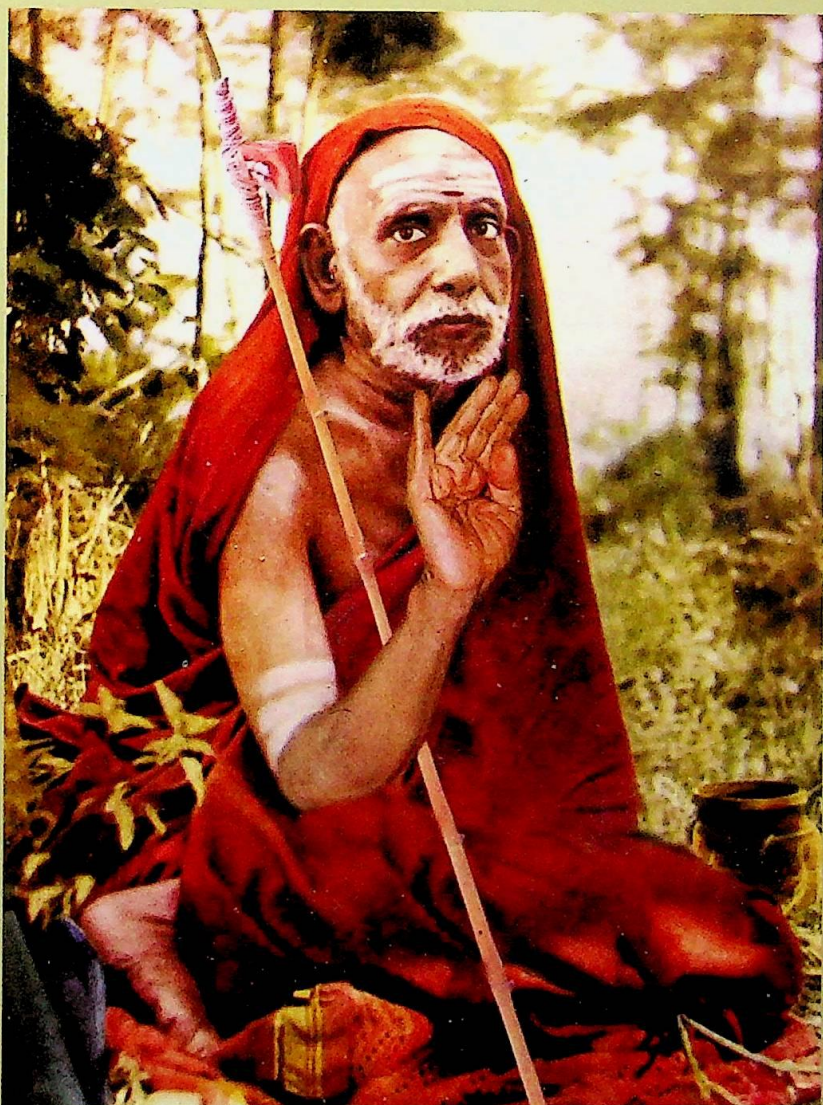


Voice of GOD



Volume - 7



Published by

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana

Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust

326507590
VEDANTA BOOK HOUSE
CHAMRAJPET, BANGALORE-560 048.
E-mail: vedantabooks@vsnl.net



Voice of GOD

Volume 7

Published by

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana

Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust

1 & 4, Kailas Bhavan, Plot 258, Sion Road, Sion (West), Mumbai 400 022

First Edition : February 13, 2006
All copyrights vested with
Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana
Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust
1 & 4, Kailas Bhavan,
Plot 258, Sion Road,
Sion (West), Mumbai 400 022
Website : www.srikanchimahaswami100.org
Email : contact@srikanchimahaswami100.org

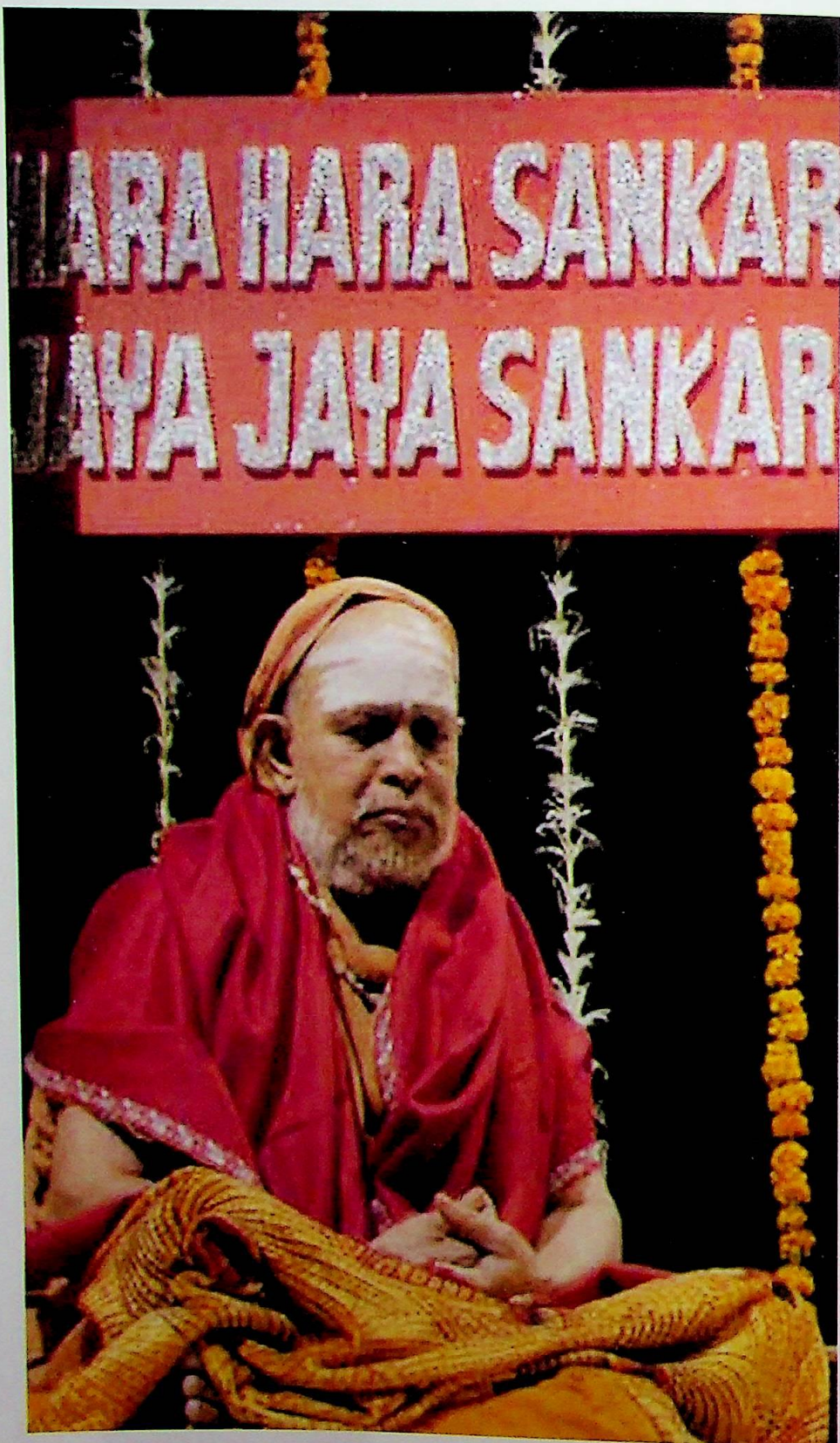
Price : Rs. 500/-

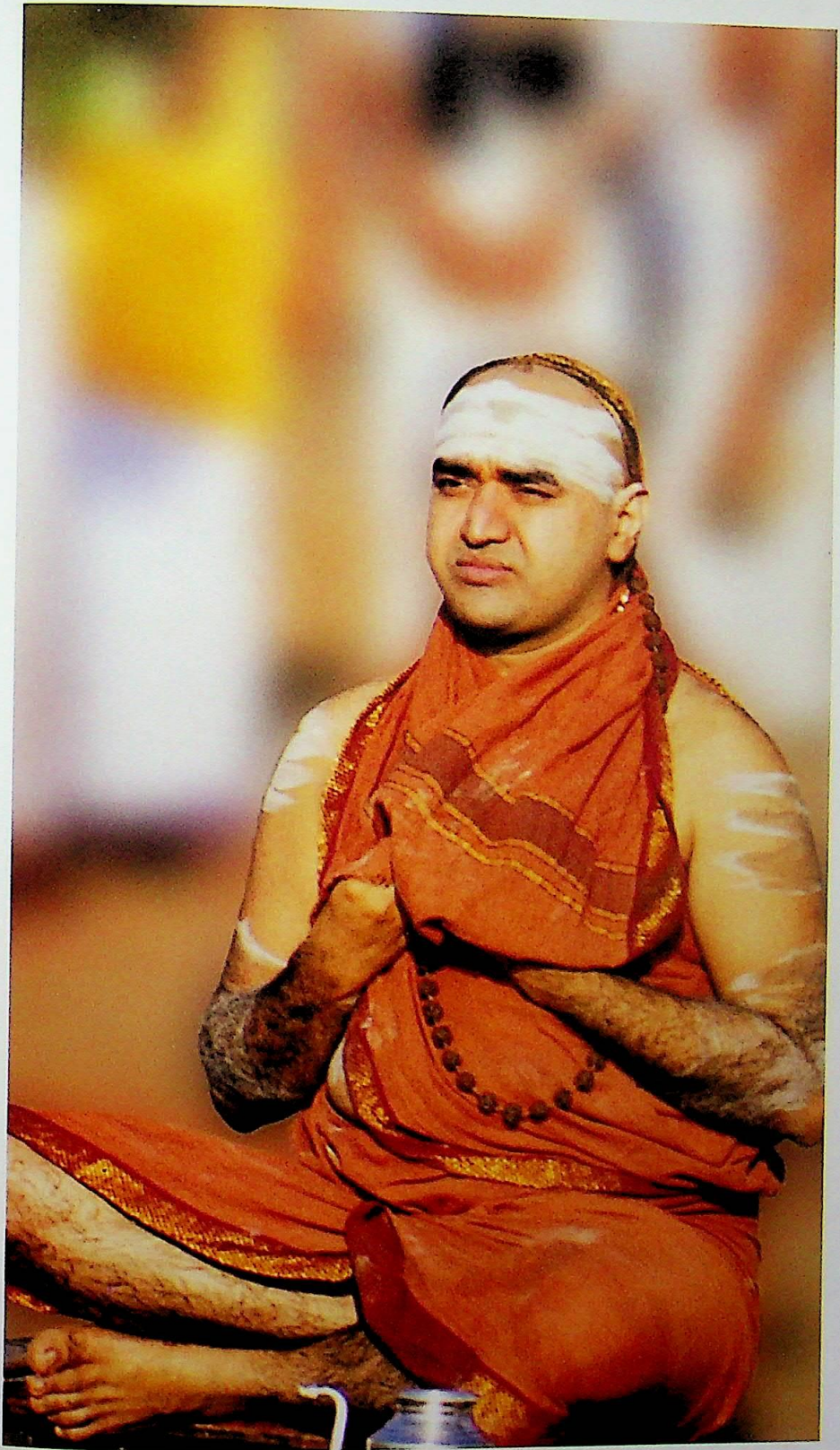
Printed at
Gnanodaya Press,
213, Valluvarkottam High Road,
Nungambakkam, Chennai - 600 034.
Phone : 28265750,
E-mail : suriya@eth.net











Email: skmkanci@md3.vsnl.in
kanchimutt@vsnl.com
www.kamakoti.org.

Sri Chandramouleeswaraya Namaha:
Sri Sankara Bhagavadpadacharya Paramparagatha Moolamnaya

Phone : (04112) 222115
Fax: (04112) 224305
(04112) 222104

His Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetadhipathi
JAGADGURU SRI SANKARACHARYA SWAMIGAL SRIMATAM SAMSTHANAM
No. 1, Salai Street, Kancheepuram - 631 502. Tamilnadu, India.
SRI JAYENDRA SARASWATHI SWAMIJI PEETAROHANA SWARNA JAYANTI
MAHOTSAV YEAR



१३-२-२००६

॥ सनातनधर्मपरिपोषणम् ॥

कलियुगेऽस्मिन् प्रायः २५०० वर्षेभ्यः पूर्वं कैलासवासी परमेश्वरः
कालट्यां शिवगुरु-आर्याम्बयोः पुत्रत्वेन अवततार । यः खलु स्वकीयोपदेशैः
लोकशङ्करत्वं प्राप्य अन्वर्थतया श्रीशङ्करो बभूव । आत्मतत्त्वोपदेशैः
तापपापाञ्जनान् सर्वान् जनान् त्रातुं तत्र तत्र आसेतुहिमाचलं पद्भ्यां सञ्चरन्तः
कर्म-भक्ति-ज्ञानमार्गं प्रदर्शयन्तः षण्मतस्थापनां, शैव-शाक्त-कौमार-गाणपत्य-
सौर-वैष्णव-पूजापद्धतिरूपां कार्यं विधाय महोपकारं कृतवन्तः ।

अत्र स्थापितस्य मतानुष्ठानस्य सर्वदाऽभिवृद्धये, सर्वजनसुखाय
सर्वजनहिताय आचरणमार्गस्य अविच्छिन्नतया प्रदर्शयितुं चतसृषु दिक्षु मठान्
स्थापयित्वा श्रीकाञ्च्यां स्वयम् अधिष्ठाय सर्वज्ञपीठमारुढवन्तः इति
बहुप्रमाणसिद्धो वृत्तान्तः ।

तत्र श्रीकाञ्चीमठपरम्परायां शिष्य-प्रशिष्यपरम्परया महान्तो गुरवः
बोधेन्द्रादयः वैदिकमतपोषणं स्वीयदेशानुष्ठानाभ्यां कुर्वन्तः अविच्छिन्नतया अद्य
यावदनुवर्तन्ते । अत एव विद्यारण्यस्वामिभिः “शम्भोमूर्तिश्चरतिभुवने
शङ्कराचार्यरूपा “इति वर्तमानप्रयोगः कृतः ।

परम्परायामस्यां पीठाधिपत्वेन स्वनामधन्याः अस्मद्गुरवः
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरेन्द्रसरस्वतीस्वामिपादाः व्यराजन्त ।

एते “प्रत्यक्षदैवम्” इत्येवं प्रसिद्धाः अस्माकं गुरवः श्रीचन्द्रशेखरेन्द्र-
सरस्वतीस्वामिनः स्वीये त्रयोदशे वयसि काञ्चीकामकोटिपीठम् आरुढाः । ततः
परं स्वस्य शतवत्सरपर्यन्तं पीठे स्थित्वा वेदधर्मशास्त्राचारपरिपालनाय
असंख्यानि कार्याणि कृतवन्तः ।

१. तत्र तत्र वेदपाठशालाः संस्थाप्य वेदापाठशालासु छात्राणाम्
अध्यापकानां च विद्यादिदानद्वारा प्रोत्साहनाय वेदरक्षणनिधि-
संस्थास्थापनम् अकार्षुः ।
२. सन्ध्यानुष्ठानम्, जातकर्म-नामकरणम्-अन्नप्राशन-चौलोपनयनम्-
विवाहादिकर्म, तदुपयुक्तमन्त्राणां अर्थबोधनाय पूर्वोक्तकर्मसु
श्रद्धोत्पादनाय “वेदधर्मपरिपालनसभां” प्रत्यस्थापयन् ।
३. स्वीयषष्ठ्यब्दपूर्तिसन्दर्भे चतुर्वेद-भाष्याणां प्रचाराय
वेदभाष्याध्ययन-अध्यापनाय च षष्ठ्यब्दपूर्तिसंस्थां संस्थाप्य
वेदभाष्यप्रचारं शास्त्रपण्डितानाम् आस्थानविदुषां च मार्गदर्शने सर्वाणि
शास्त्राणि पाठयित्वा प्राचीनशास्त्रोद्धारं च अकार्षुः ।
४. भक्तिमार्गप्रसाराय तामिल्-संस्कृतस्तोत्राणि कण्ठस्थीकृतवद्वयः
सर्वेभ्यः पारितोषिकं दत्तवन्तः ।
५. कलौ मुख्यधर्मस्य नामसंकीर्तनस्य विशेषतोऽभिवृद्धये नामलेखकानां
सर्वेषां योग्यसम्माननं कृत्वा प्रोत्साहितवन्तः ।
६. सनातनवैदिकधर्मानुष्ठातृणां श्रद्धाभक्ति-विवर्धनाय ते तत्र तत्र
वैदिककर्मणां, मन्त्राणां विशिष्टार्थान् प्रवचनरूपेण शास्त्रज्ञद्वारा
बोधितवन्तः ।

७. और्ध्वदैहिकानुष्ठानाय अपेक्षित-स्थलाभावात् उत्पन्नक्लेशनिवर्तये ज्ञानवापीस्थलानि निर्माय सर्वेषां स्वधर्मानुष्ठानाय बहूपकृतवन्तः ।

महान्तः एते स्वपद्भ्याम् एव सम्पूर्ण भारतदेशे यात्रां च विधाय काशीयात्रां च कृत्वा बहूनि भगवत्पादस्मारकाणि दृढभवनानि तत्र तत्र स्थापितवन्तः ।

१) मण्डनमिश्र-श्रीशङ्करसंवादो जगत्प्रसिद्धः विराजते । स च प्रयोगक्षेत्रे संबृत्त इति हेतोः तस्मिन् पुण्यक्षेत्रे तत्स्मारकतया वेदवेदाङ्गवेदान्त-त्रिवेणीसंगमक्षेत्रे गंगायमुनासरस्वतिसंगमे प्रसिद्धत्रिवेणीसंगमे संगमस्नानसमनन्तरं दर्शनार्थं प्रसिद्धशंकरविमानमंडपं स्थापयामासुः ।

२. रामेश्वरक्षेत्रे समुद्रतीरे एव श्रीशङ्करमठं, मूर्तिं च प्रतिष्ठाय स्मारकचिह्नं च कृतवन्तः ।

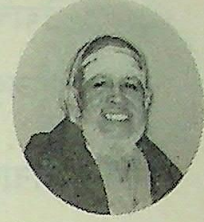
३. श्रीकालटिक्क्षेत्रेऽपि भगवत्पादानां कीर्तिस्तंभं च प्रतिष्ठाप्य अनेक जनेषु गुरुस्मरणम् उत्पादितवन्तः ।

४. हम्पिनगरे चतुर्वेदभाष्यप्रणेतृणां श्रीविद्यारण्यस्वामिनाम् आवासभूमौ कांश्चन मासानुषित्वा तत्रैव विद्यमानानां शिलाशासनानां क्रोडीकरणम्, तद्विषये तत्रत्यप्राचीनसंस्कृतिविषये शोधं च कारयित्वा लोकोपकारार्थं, विद्यारण्यश्रीचरणानां विषये लोके श्रद्धाभक्त्युत्पादयितुं च सर्वान् शिलाशासनस्थविषयान् संगृह्य बहूनि पुस्तकानि मुद्रापयामासुः ।

५. काञ्चीपुर द्रस्ट सस्थां सस्थाप्य देवपूजायाः अवश्यकर्तव्यत्वम्, प्राचीनजीर्णमन्दिरेषु पूजाकर्तृणां मासिकं वेतनं प्रदाय प्रजाद्वारा जनेषु भक्तिबीजम् उत्पादितवन्तः ।

६. भारते बहुत्र देवालयानां जीर्णतां प्राचीनतां च दृष्ट्वा स्व तपःशक्त्या तत्रत्य महिमानं ज्ञात्वा तेषां जीर्णोद्धारं पुनः प्रतिष्ठां च अकार्षुः ।
७. नवीनशास्त्रप्रभावेण प्राचीनशास्त्राणां, अध्येतृणां च संख्या न्यूना सम्पन्नेति ज्ञात्वा विभिन्नशास्त्राणां तत्रापि विशेषतः न्यायशास्त्रस्य संरक्षणाय काञ्च्यमेव न्यायविद्यालयं स्थापयामासुः ।
८. प्राचीनशास्त्रपण्डितानां मासिकं वेतनम् अल्पमिति ज्ञात्वा मत्वा च, तद्वारा कुटुम्बसंरक्षणे क्लेशं दृष्ट्वा प्रतिपण्डितं न्यूनातिन्यूनम् अष्टशतं मासिकसम्भावना भवत्विति स्वकृपया गुरुवारसभापद्धतिमनुष्ठाय शास्त्रपण्डितानाम् आजीवनं संरक्षणमिदानीमपि अनुस्यूततया विधीयमानमस्ति ।
९. पण्डितानां स्वस्थले एव सम्भावनां दत्त्वा शिष्यान् तत्रैव सम्प्रेष्य शास्त्राध्ययनं कारितवन्तः तद्वारा सज्जीकृताः विद्यार्थिनः भारते बहुत्र विराजन्ते ।
१०. “देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम्” इति भगवत्पादसूक्तिम् अवलम्ब्य कैङ्कर्यसभाः वल्लीः प्रतिनगरे प्रतिग्रामं च संस्थाप्य दीनानां विवाहादिषु कार्येषु अपरिमितशक्त्या धनसाहाय्यं कृतवन्तः ।

एवं बहुविधलोकोपकारकार्याणां प्रत्यक्षतया परोक्षतया वा सहकृतवतां तपोमूर्तिणां जगद्गुरुणां साक्षात् ईश्वरस्वरूपाणां महतां पीठारोहणशताब्दी आगामिनिवर्षे आगमिष्यति । तत्सन्दर्भे तत्र भवतां तेषां महतां स्मरणेन तदभीष्टानां सत्कर्मणां सर्वेषां परितः अभिवृद्धये नानाविधाः कार्यक्रमाः आयोजनीयाः इति बहुभिः भक्तैः वाच्छ्यते । तादृशमहोत्सवकार्यक्रमाः सम्यक् प्रचलन्तु इति आशास्महे । तत्र च सर्वे आस्तिकजना भागं स्वीकृत्य जन्मसाफल्यं लभन्ताम् इति च क्रियते नारायणस्मृतिः ।



श्री काञ्चीकामकोटिपीठाधिपति जगद्गुरु श्रीजयेन्द्रसरस्वती गुरुस्तुतिः

श्री काञ्ची कामकोटि पीठाधिपति
जगद्गुरु श्री जयेन्द्र सरस्वती श्रीपादैः कृता

अपार करुणासिन्धुं ज्ञानदं शान्तरूपिणम् ।

श्री चन्द्रशेखरगुरुं प्रणममि मुदाऽन्वहम् ॥

गुरुवारसभाद्वारा शास्त्रसंरक्षणं कृतम्

अनूराधासभाद्वारा वेदसंरक्षणं कृतम् ।

मार्गशीर्षे मासवरे स्तोत्रपाठप्रचारणम्

वेदभाष्यप्रचारार्थं रत्नोत्सवनिधिः कृतः ॥

कर्मकाण्डप्रचारार्थं वेदधर्मसभा कृता

वेदान्तार्थप्रचारार्थं विद्यारण्यनिधिः कृतः ।

शिलालेखप्रचारार्थं उद्वृत्तनिधिः कृतः

गोब्राह्मणहितार्थाय वेदरक्षणगोनिधिः ॥

गोशाला पाठशाला च गुरुभिस्तत्र निर्मिते

बालिकानां विवाहार्थं कन्यादाननिधिः कृतः ।

देवार्चकानां साह्यार्थं कच्छिमदुर निधिः कृतः
बालवृद्धातुराणां च व्यवस्था परिपालने ॥

अनाथप्रेतसंस्कारात् अश्वमेधफलं लभेत्
इति वाक्यानुसारेण व्यवस्था तत्र कल्पिता ।
यत्र श्रीभगवत्पादैः क्षेत्रपर्यटनं कृतम्
तत्र तेषां शिलाभूर्तिं प्रतिष्ठाप्य शुभं कृतम् ॥

भक्त वाञ्छाभिसिद्धयर्थं नामतारकलेखनम्
राजतं च रथं कृत्वा कामाक्ष्याः परिवाहनम् ।
कामाक्ष्यंबाविमानस्य स्वर्णपत्रैः समावृतः
मूलस्योत्सवकामाक्ष्याः स्वर्णवर्मपरिष्कृतिः ॥

ललितानामसाहस्र स्वर्णमाला विराजते
श्रीदेव्याः पर्वकालेषु सुवर्णरथ चालनम् ।
चिदम्बर नटेशस्य सुवैडूर्यकिरीटकम्
करेऽभयप्रदे पादे कुञ्चित रत्नभूषणम् ॥

मुष्टितण्डुलदानेन दरिद्राणां च भोजनम्
रुग्णालये भगवतः प्रसादा विनियोजनम् ।
लोकक्षेमहितार्थाय गुरुभिः बहु तत्कृतम्
स्मरन् तद्वन्दनं कुर्वन् जन्मसाफल्यमाप्नुयात् ॥





सद्गुरुदशकम्

श्री शङ्करविजयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीचरणैः कृतम्

- श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणोक्तधर्ममार्गरतं गुरुम् ।
भक्तानां हितवक्तारं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धये ॥ १ ॥
- अद्वैतानन्दभरितं साधूनामुपकारिणम् ।
सर्वशास्त्रविदं शान्तं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धये ॥ २ ॥
- कर्मभक्तिज्ञानमार्गप्रचारे बद्धकङ्कणम् ।
अनुग्रहप्रदातारं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धये ॥ ३ ॥
- भगवत्पादपादाब्जविनिवेशितचेतसः ।
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरगुरोः प्रसादो मयि जायताम् ॥ ४ ॥
- क्षेत्रतीर्थकथाभिज्ञः सञ्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ।
चन्द्रशेखरवर्यो मे सन्निधत्तां सदा हृदि ॥ ५ ॥
- पोषणे वेदशास्त्राणां दत्तचित्तमहर्निशम् ।
क्षेत्रयात्रारतं वन्दे सद्गुरुं चन्द्रशेखरम् ॥ ६ ॥
- वेदज्ञान् वेदभाष्यज्ञान् कर्तुं यस्य समुद्यमः ।
गुरुर्यस्य महादेवः तं वन्दे चन्द्रशेखरम् ॥ ७ ॥

मणिवाचकगोदादिभक्तिवागमृतैर्भृशम् ।

बालानां भगवद्भक्तिं वर्धयन्तं गुरुं भजे ॥

८ ॥

लघूपदेशैर्नास्तिक्यभावमर्दनकोविदम् ।

शिवं स्मितमुखं शान्तं प्रणतोऽस्मि जगद्गुरुम् ॥

९ ॥

विनयेन प्रार्थयेऽहं विद्यां बोधय मे गुरो ।

मार्गमन्यं न जानेऽहं भवन्तं शरणं गतः ॥

१० ॥



INTRODUCTION

Location : Kalavai, a small town in the Vellore District of
Tamil Nadu, India.

Date : February 13, 1907.

A young boy of thirteen is chosen to become the 68th Pītādhīpathi of Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam, in the illustrious paramparā of Ācharyas who adorned the Pītam established by Sri Ādhi Śankarā more than 2500 years ago.

That boy is none other than His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrāsēkharēndra Saraswathi Swāmīgal. To millions of devotees he was simply 'Periyava' — the revered one or Maha-Periyava. 'Periyava' in Tamil means a great person. That term however has acquired a special meaning because it has come to refer to His Holiness. It is a term that at once conveys endearment, reverence and devotion. It would never be mentioned in a casual manner. Mahaswami and Pāramāchāryā are his other well-known appellations.

The Pāramāchāryā was the Pītādhīpathi of the Mutt for 87 long years. During this period, Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam acquired new strength as an institution that propagated Sri Ādhi Śankarā's teachings. The devotion, fervour and intensity with which the Pāramāchāryā practised what Ādhi Śankarā had preached, is unparalleled. He lived a spartan life. Throughout his life, the main focus of his concern and activities was rejuvenating Vēdha adhyayana, the Dharma Sasthras and the age old tradition which

had suffered decline. 'Vēdha rakshanam' was his very life breath and he referred to this in most of his public discourses and private conversations. His providing regular support to Vēdha Pātāsālās through the Vēdha Rakshna Nidhi Trust (which he founded), honouring Vedhic scholars, holding regular sadhas which included discussions on arts and culture - these led to a renewed interest in Vedhic religion, Dharma sasthras and Sanskrit. His long tenure as Pitāthipathi was the golden era of the Kānchi Kāmakōti Pitam.

Pāramāchāryā was a walking university. Scholars of all sects, not only from all over India but also from countries abroad came to him and deemed it a blessing and a privilege to go back enlightened after meeting him. His regular visitors ranged from the most ordinary village folk to the highest in the land. Presidents and Prime Ministers, Kings and Queens, Highnesses and Excellencies came to spend a few moments with him and seek his blessings.

That the Pāramāchāryā was an extraordinary phenomenon can be seen from this incident. When he was in his late eighties he left Kānchipuram and undertook a padha yathra through Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra. Before he returned to Kānchipuram he made all arrangements for the construction of an exquisite Nataraja temple at Satara (Uttara Chidambaram). The uniqueness about this temple is the fact that the states of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra came together to build the 5 doorways to the temple. The state of Kerala supplied the entire wood required for the temple. It was only his grace and moral influence that made this possible.

The Pāramāchāryā's catholicity of outlook was extraordinary. He was the Advaita Ācharya. He was the authentic spokesman of Hindu religion and its Dharma Shastras and of Sanathana Dharma. He even believed that it was Vedhic religion that had prevailed all over the world in ancient times. But, just as he had high regard for the Ācharyas of other philosophical doctrines

like Ramanuja and Madhva and the Nayanmars of Saiva Siddhanta, he had great respect for Jesus and Mohamed Nabi, the Prophet. He could be so considerate as to express the view that those who indulged in proselytisation did so out of their conviction that their religion alone could secure redemption.

February 13, 2006 marks the beginning of the 100th year of the Pāramāchāryā's Sanyāsa Swīkarana (entering the ascetic order) and Pītārōhaṇa (becoming the head of the Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam). Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust has been specially formed to celebrate this significant milestone in the spiritual history of India.

The main objective of the Trust is to spread the thoughts and the message of the Pāramāchāryā across the world, not just to his devotees, but even to others who might never have had the opportunity to have his dharsan. With this objective in view the Trust has undertaken on priority the translation into English and other major Indian languages of his discourses in Tamil (upansayam). To begin with, we have chosen 'Deivathin Kural' - Voice of God in Tamil. It is a collection of the Pāramāchāryā's discourses starting from 1932. There are seven volumes each of about 1000 pages. His talks cover a wide range of topics apart from all aspects of Vedhic dharma and Hindu religion which is the main focus. It is a veritable encyclopedia of Hindu religion and dharma to which people refer for authentic information on these aspects.

'Deivathin Kural' is a monumental work by Sri Ra Gānapathy and it occupies a special place among many books written about Pāramāchāryā. Sri Gānapathy painstakingly collated all of Pāramāchāryā's talks, conversations, casual comments, answers to questions etc covering several aspects of our ancient religion, dharma and culture. Sri Gānapathy not only collected the material but also collated and organized under various subjects everything that the Pāramāchāryā had spoken about a subject over many years, at several places.

The purpose of the English translation is two fold. One is to reach Pāramāchāryā's thoughts and message to a wider audience. The second is to use the English translation as the basic text for translation into other Indian languages. The original in Tamil portrays in large measure the simplicity and clarity of thoughts and expressions and the unique story telling style of the Pāramāchāryā. It has been our attempt to capture it in English. As readers will know this is not an easy task. In one of his talks, while explaining the need to protect the Vēdhas in their original form, the Pāramāchāryā himself has, in his characteristic style, referred to the limitations of any translation.

The Pāramāchāryā's observations are a warning to us and we are deeply conscious of our responsibility. Effort has been made to address the average reader through this work in simple language. Since the English version is to be the base from which translation into other Indian languages will be done, suitable diacritical markings have been used for Sanskrit and Tamil words. Wherever necessary the actual Sanskrit words and Ślōkās have been given with diacritical markings and the meanings are also given along with the words. This should make it more convenient for the reader than a separate glossary at the end.

It is usual to share one's good and memorable experiences with others. When two devotees of the Pāramāchāryā meet, it turns out to be an occasion for sharing of experiences. Entire train journeys could be spent talking only about him and his various qualities. He has indeed created a huge family, truly a Vasudaiva Kutumbhakam. It is the hope and wish of Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust that readers will experience the Pāramāchāryā through these pages, which in itself would be an elevating experience.

His talks do more than providing insight into Vedhic Dharma and Hindu religion. There is indeed hope that inspite of the

declining moral values all around, dharma will prevail. It should also be clear that mere wishful thinking will not make that happen. All of us have a duty and responsibility towards making it happen. The many schemes which the Pāramāchāryā introduced are simple and effective. If anything, we have to revive many of his practical ideas and implement them.

The blessings of H.H. Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal and H.H. Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal, the 69th and 70th Ācharyas of Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam have provided encouragement to this Trust to embark on a project of this magnitude. It is their Sankalpa that the Pāramāchāryā's message should reach every Indian wherever he may be. We are overwhelmed by the responsibility they have placed on us.

Millions of the Pāramāchāryā's devotees sincerely believe that He is alive even today and He is guiding us on the path of dharma. It is His spirit that acts as the beacon in these troubled times. It is through His grace that this work is being published.

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami
Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust
Mumbai
February 13, 2006



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

His Holiness Sri Chandrāsēkharēndra Saraswati the 68th Acharya of Sri Kānchi Kāmākoti Pītam, was humility personified. In the words of one of his ardent devotees, he was the greatest 'mayavi' — in this that he neither revealed himself as God nor as God's voice. He has not even hinted as much.

Throughout his public discourses and private conversations he has been meticulous in his expressions. He will always trace his views to the Vēdhas, the Puranas or the Dharma shastras. It was never 'my opinion or point of view'. His focus was on truth and since it is truth that he has consistently spoken about, the Tamil volumes came to be named 'Deivathin Kural' — meaning *Voice of God*.

In the introduction we have already referred to the Herculean efforts made by Sri Ra Gānapathy to compile the seven volumes of 'Deivathin Kural' and have them published. While all of us owe our eternal gratitude to Sri Gānapathy we, in the Trust, have a special duty not just to thank him but salute him, which we do with great pleasure.

We are also grateful to Sri Thirunavukkarasu of Vanathi Publications who has published all the seven volumes of 'Deivathin Kural'. He has rendered a glorious service for the preservation of Sanathana Dharma. Vanathi Publications have also graciously permitted us to translate the original Tamil works not only in English but also in other Indian languages. We specially thank them

for this. May the blessings of the Pāramāchāryā be always with them.

In his preface to the Tamil editions Sri Ganapathy has thanked Kalki and B.G. Paul & Co, a publishing house. He has also thanked several individuals making special mention of Sri Ananthānandēndra Saraswathy Swāmigal, popularly known as 'Sri Ānjanēya Swāmigal, who spent several years with the Pāramāchāryā. He was witness to several conversations and expositions of Pāramāchāryā on various topics. It was he who helped Sri Gānapathy to capture the delicate nuances on many subjects, discussed by the Pāramāchāryā. In addition, there were devotees who had assiduously taken notes from the Pāramāchāryā's conversations and speeches and gladly shared them with Sri Ganapathy but on strict conditions of anonymity. Such is their devotion and humility.

We approached Sri V. Krishnamachari of Mumbai for taking up the responsibility on the Tamil to English translation work. He readily consented to undertake the onerous task. Sri Krishnamachari who is in his late seventies is a retired official of the railways. He had developed a flare for literary work very early in his life. He has been a freelance journalist and has also reviewed several books including books on religion. He has especially taken interest in translations and some of his translated works have been published by the Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan. Currently, he is the Executive Editor of Dilip, a magazine devoted to Hindu religion and culture, which was founded at the instance of the Pāramāchāryā and he is also the Secretary of Bombay Tamil Sangham. He has done this English translation as a labour of love and we wish to record our grateful thanks to him.

As in all such projects, there will always be scores of silent volunteers, who do things just for the pleasure of rendering service.

In this case, they have performed this as a yagna because of their unstinting devotion to the Pāramāchāryā. We are grateful to all of them.

It is because of the Divine grace and the blessings of the Pāramāchāryā that we even thought of this monumental project. While we were still thinking of the project, H.H. Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal and H.H. Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal gave us the much needed encouragement and impetus to plunge into this ocean of nectar in the manner of what Krishna did to Arjuna to spur him into action. We offer our obeisance to the two Ācharyas.

Sri Kanchi Mahaswami
Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust
Mumbai
February 13, 2006



GUIDANCE TO PRONUNCIATION OF
NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH DIACRITICAL MARKING

ALPHABET	TO BE PRONOUNCED AS
Ā ā	A in August, Author
Ē ē	A in April, Angel
Ī ī	E in East, Eagle
Ō ō	o in open, over
Ū	oo in cool, Tool
Ś ś	S in Sivaji, Sankar Syamala
Ō ō	n in rent, under, bundle
Ḳ ḳ	l in pluck, click, block

The word Āchāryā with capital A, whenever appearing, refers to
Ādhi Sankara Bhagavadpādā

GUIDANCE TO PROPOSITIONS

NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH INHERENT MEANING

The following words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text.

The following words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text.

English	11
French	12
German	13
Italian	14
Spanish	15
Portuguese	16
Russian	17
Polish	18
Czech	19
Slovak	20
Hungarian	21
Romanian	22
Bulgarian	23
Serbian	24
Croatian	25
Slovenian	26
Yugoslavian	27
Albanian	28
Greek	29
Turkish	30
Arabic	31
Hebrew	32
Persian	33
Urdu	34
Sinhalese	35
Tamil	36
Malay	37
Indonesian	38
Thai	39
Vietnamese	40
Laotian	41
Khmer	42
Siamese	43
Burmese	44
Malayalam	45
Kannada	46
Telugu	47
Marathi	48
Gujarati	49
Punjabi	50
Hindi	51
Urdu	52
Sinhalese	53
Tamil	54
Malay	55
Indonesian	56
Thai	57
Vietnamese	58
Laotian	59
Khmer	60
Siamese	61
Burmese	62
Malayalam	63
Kannada	64
Telugu	65
Marathi	66
Gujarati	67
Punjabi	68
Hindi	69
Urdu	70
Sinhalese	71
Tamil	72
Malay	73
Indonesian	74
Thai	75
Vietnamese	76
Laotian	77
Khmer	78
Siamese	79
Burmese	80
Malayalam	81
Kannada	82
Telugu	83
Marathi	84
Gujarati	85
Punjabi	86
Hindi	87
Urdu	88
Sinhalese	89
Tamil	90
Malay	91
Indonesian	92
Thai	93
Vietnamese	94
Laotian	95
Khmer	96
Siamese	97
Burmese	98
Malayalam	99
Kannada	100

The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the text.

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Srīmukham	... (i)
Gurusthuthi	... (v)
Introduction	... (ix)
Acknowledgements	... (xiv)
Guidance to Pronunciation	... (xvii)
1) MANGALĀRAMBHAM	... 1
VINĀYAKĀ AND TAMIL	... 3
Vignēśwara's Great Help to Tamil Nadu	... 3
Important Vaishṇava Temples And Vignēśwara's Sport ...	4
Three Deities Which Face The South:	
Amity Between Śaivism And Vaishṇavam	... 7
The Truth And Appropriateness of Vināyakā's Līlā	... 8
The Exclusive Feature of Bharat	... 10
Worship According To Prescribed Procedure	
And Devotional Worship	... 11
Growth of Culture Only Due To Gaṇēśa	... 14
One Who Has The Maximum Number of Temples	... 14
Vināyakā and Tamil	... 15
The Grace That Gives Good Mind And Speech -	
From Dharma and Upto Mōksha	... 15
Sanskrit And Tamil	... 16

2) GURU	...	19
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GURU AND THE ŚISHYA	...	21
'Ra' Which Destroys Sin	...	23
'Wo' Is The Form of Mahā Vishṇu	...	24
Vishṇu, Vāsudēvā - The Terms Explained	...	25
What The Śishya Gains From Guru's Qualities	...	26
Adhvaitham And The Aspect of Anugraham (Grace)	...	27
Mahā Vishṇu As The Guru	...	29
Father - Guru	...	29
Guru Too Has The Qualities of The Father	...	30
Father-Guru In Other Religions	...	32
Paternal Lineage Being The Lineage of Guru	...	34
Names of Rishis In Maternal Lineage		
Glory of Mother As Expounded By Āchāryā	...	35
Women And Brahma Vidhyā	...	36
Scholarship of Women : Difference Between The Olden Times And These Days	...	38
The High Status Accorded to Women By Āchāryā	...	40
Mother Too As Guru : Āchāryā's Approval	...	41
Sathyakāma Jāpālar	...	43
Guru Who Is Above The Mother And Father	...	44
Development of The Brain And The Heart	...	45
The Present Fallen State	...	47
Secular Education	...	47
Guru: Āchāryā	...	49

Adhyakshaka : Adhyāpak	...	50
Characteristics of The Guru Will Be Imbibed By The Śishya Also	...	50
Greatness of The Word 'Āchāryā'	...	51
Upādhyāyā	...	52
Dēśikar Who Shows The Way	...	53
In Upanishad - Guru Who Shows The Way	...	54
Even Great Men Have Had Several Gurus	...	55
Pathivratham And Guruvratham	...	57
The Guru Who Shows The Way, As Seen In Vēdhās	...	64
Guru As Kshēthrajna	...	66
Guru : For The Final Goal And Intermediate Stages	...	69
The Entire Knowledge of The Guru Is For Śishya	...	70
The Duty of Āchāryā As Laid Down By Our Āchāryā	...	71
Sadhguru And Sadhsishya	...	72
The Entire 'Wealth' of The Guru Is For The Śishya	...	72
More Lessons About Guru-Śishya	...	74
Explanation of Śishya	...	75
Guru's Humility	...	76
Not Just Being Humble But Telling The Whole Truth	...	78
Guru's Upadēśam Cannot Be Compensated For	...	78
Upadēśam That Comes As A Tradition	...	79
One Who Violates Tradition Is 'Stupid' - Āchāryā .	...	80
Āchāryā's Bhakthi To Guru Parampara	...	81
One Who Never Says A Thing He Does Not Know	...	82
Making Sure of The Guru's Qualification And Doing Surrender	...	84

The Noble Culture of The Guru Himself		
Becoming A Śishya:	...	85
Half-Baked Knowledge Is Pride Perfect		
Knowledge is Humility	...	87
Purōhithar	...	90
Culture Undermined In Free-India	...	91
Vidhyā Guru And Dikshā Guru	...	92
Guru's Great Responsibility	...	92
Purōhitha And Guru	...	93
Śishya's Effort And The Guru's Grace	...	95
The Next Line	...	97
Guru Who Raises The Śishya To His Own Level	...	98
The Qualifications of A Śishya And The Compassion of The Guru	...	100
The Spurious Pundits Exposed By The Upanishads And Śankara	...	101
The Authority of Vēdhās; Other Religions	...	104
Śraddhā (Faith) In Vēdhās And The Guru	...	106
Surrender (Śaraṇāgathi)	...	106
Vēdhās - Śāstrās To Be Learnt Only Through A Guru		
Ambāl's Strange Plan	...	107
Common Simple Way of Worship And Prayers Through Sthōthrās	...	108
The Community Of People : Even If An Exclusive Guru Is Not There, A Common Guru Is Necessary	...	113

Humility And Śraddhā	... 115
The Greatness of Śraddhā As Shown By Āchāryā	... 116
Śaranāgathi Flows From Śraddhā	... 117
Two Kinds of Surrender And Guru-Śishya Relationship...	118
3) THE STATE	... 121
THE STATE AND RELIGION	... 123
Dharma Chakram - Indication of Lord's Grace	... 123
True Secularism	... 123
Responsibilities of The State In Elevating The Peoples' Mind	... 124
Limitations of The Role of The State in Matters of Religion...	125
Independent Body of Representatives of All Religions	... 126
Religious Leaders Should Not Involve Themselves In Politics	... 127
What The Government Gains by Nurturing Religion	... 127
Government Support : Hindu Religion And Other Religions	... 128
Institutions of Hindu Religion : Lacking In Man Power And Financial Support	... 129
Religions Nurtured By Kings And People	... 130
What The Freedom Movement Failed To Do: How Hindu Religion Was Affected	... 130
People of All Religions to Live As Brothers	... 132
The Strange Position of The Minorities And The Majority In India	... 132
Aspects of Religion Which Need State Support	... 133

People's Support Is The Asset In Matters of Religion	...	133
Freedom of Religion And Religious Conversion	...	134
Propaganda - The Right And Wrong Way	...	135
Ban On And Punishment For Wrong Methods	...	135
Hindu Religion And Conversion; Re-Conversion To Set Right Original Conversion	...	140
Use of Methods Unrelated To Religion		
To Meet With Severe Punishment:	...	141
So Long As Conversion Prevails, Return To Parent Religion Should Be Permitted:	...	145
Religion And Spirituality: The High Point of India	...	145
Decline of Religious Feelings In India:		
What The History of A Thousand Years Shows	...	146
The Cunning Ways of Foreigners And The 'Two Revolutions'	...	147
The Big Question Mark Before Us	...	148
Atmosphere of Disbelief; The Result of Gandhism Not Being Adopted	...	149
State Religion	...	150
Changes In Educational Scheme :		
Giving Importance To Teaching of Religion	...	151
People Have To Fight For Spiritual Freedom Just As For Political Freedom	...	151
The Real Reason For The Dharma Chakra Having Found A Place In The National Flag	...	153
Vedhic Saying As The Nation's Motto	...	154
Is It Dharma Chakra or A Factory Wheel?	...	155

Gītā's Dharma Chakram	... 155
The Path Of Dharma Chakra - Sacrifice Is Its Essence	... 156
Prayers And Blessings For The Freedom of The Individual And The Country	... 158
4) SOCIETY	... 161
FOR THE YOUNGSTERS	... 163
For The Youngsters - 2: Bathe Your Mind	... 164
Clean Mind	... 165
Uttering Lies And Fear	... 166
Jealousy	... 166
The Lord's Love And Rules of Dharma	... 169
Pray To Become Good Children	... 169
For The Young - 3 : One Who Is Mother And Father of The World	... 170
Mother And Father - The First God We Know of	... 170
For The Mind And Intellect To Become Clear	... 171
Being of Help To Others	... 172
In Order That Bad Qualities Do Not Affect	... 173
Arōhara	... 173
For Adult Students	... 174
Bhakthi Is Essential	... 174
For The Development of Good Conduct	.. 175
Politics - Never	... 175
Service Without Hindrance To Studies	... 177
Cinema, Drugs, Newspapers, Narcotics	... 178
Educational Institutions of Olden Times	... 179

Discipline Is Needed	...	180
Self Control Is Itself A Great Achievement	...	181
A New Type of Students Union	...	181
Develop The Good And Curtail The Bad	...	182
Gō Samrakshaṇam (Cow Protection)	...	183
Gōmāthā And Bhūmāthā	...	184
Srīmāthā And Gōmāthā	...	185
Glory - Both In Practical Terms And Spiritually	...	186
Cow's Milk : Wholesome Food, Improves Sathva Guṇa	...	186
Where There Is Universal Love	...	187
Even The Cow's Dung Is Pure	...	188
The Example of Bhopal	...	189
Panchagavyam	...	190
In Medical Treatment And In Musical Instruments	...	191
Cruelty To The Cow Is Like Killing The Mother	...	191
The Cow's Horn Is Something Special	...	192
Abhishēkam With Ghee	...	193
Vibhūthi	...	193
The Dust Rising From The Cow's Hoof	...	194
No Yajna Without The Cow	...	195
Protecting The Cow Is Protecting The World	...	196
Gōmāthā And Lakshmī	...	197
Unpardonable Crime	...	199
The Duty of The State And The People	...	199
Easy Way To Feed A Cow	...	200

Protective Shelters	... 201
People To Come Together As A Family In The Service of The Cow	... 202
Nurturing The Cow Is Puṇya, Neglecting It Is Sin	... 202
Cow Protection In Olden Times	... 203
National Wealth	... 204
Milk Not To Be Wasted on Coffee	... 204
Ghee Lamp	... 205
Law to Protect Cow Slaughter	... 206
5) CULTURE	... 209
THE ART OF DRAMA - THEN AND NOW	... 211
Drama And Emotion	... 212
The Hero	... 214
Happy End	... 214
Navarasas - Peace (Śāntham)	... 216
Arts Must Help In Reaching The State of Peace (Śāntham)...	218
Today's Fallen State	... 220
Adhvaitham And Kānchī Sri Matam	
Figuring In A Swayamvaram	... 222
Sacrifice By Mothers	... 225
Adhvaitham In Swayamvaram	... 227
Saraswathī's Skill	... 230
How Literature Speaks of Dharma	... 231
The Deity of Kānchi Mutt In The Story of Nalā	... 231
The Great Chōlā King* One Who Had on His Head The Holy Feet of The Lord (Śivapādhasēkaran)	... 233

Nothing Can Be A Bar To Knowledge	...	236
Kēsīdhwajar	...	238
Adhwaitha Jnānis And The Phenomenal World	...	238
Kāṇḍikyar	...	240
The Story Takes Shape	...	240
Prāyaschitham : Lord's Name And Vaidhika Karmā	...	242
Asking The Enemy For Prāyaschitham	...	242
Indian Culture	...	245
Guru Dakṣhiṇā	...	245
Sworn Enemies Become Guru-Śishya	...	248
The Lessons of The Story	...	250
Where The Gītā, The Bible, The Kural Speak Alike	...	250
6) MATTERS DIVINE	...	253
ĀTHMĀ AS WITNESS (SĀKSHI)	...	255
Sākshi - In Practice	...	257
Sri Rama And 'Agni Sākshi'	...	261
When The Gods Become Witness	...	264
Sākshi Gaṇapathi	...	264
Sākshi Gopāl	...	269
SākshināYakēśwarar	...	275
SākshināThēśwarar	...	277
Dīpāvālī - Holy Bath In Gangā And Kāvēri	...	282
Plea to Krishṇā	...	283
Narakāśura's Death; Sathyabhāmā's Role	...	284
Bhūmādēvi's Prayers	...	287

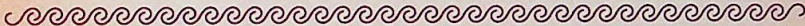
Gītā: Dīpāvālī's Younger Brother	... 290
Why 'Gangā Snānam'?	... 292
A Blemish Even For The Lord (Dhōsham)	... 293
Prāyaschittha Prescribed By Īśwarā	... 294
Kāvēri-Thulā Ghāt	... 296
Kāvēri Snānam on Dīpāvālī Day	... 297
7) S A D H Ā S I V A M	... 299
ĀDHI GURU	... 301
The Eight Names (Ashtanāmā): Mahādēva	... 302
Mahālingam - Mahēśwaran	... 303
The Five Functions	... 304
Only Śiva Has The Adjective 'Sadhā'	... 305
Sadhāśiva In Rig Vēdha	... 306
He Is What Is Good And The Bad Too	... 307
'Race Theory' Is Wrong	... 308
One Who Is Always "Ugra" And Always "Sowmya"	... 308
Rudra Too Is Śiva Inside	... 310
Sadhāśivōm - What The Vēdhā Declares	... 311
Śiva And Sivam	... 312
The Bliss of 'Sath' And 'Chith' Combining In Subrahmaṇyam	... 315
Sathyam, Śivam, Sundaram	... 316
8) PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING NAMASKĀRAM	... 319
NAMŌNAMAḤ	... 321
The Mahāswāmi's Grievance	... 321

Āchāryā's Rule For A Sanyāsi	... 321
Āchāryā And Nārāyaṇa Nāmā	... 321
All Namaskārās Are For Nārāyaṇa Only	... 327
True Smaraṇam	... 328
True Sanyāsi And Namaskāram	... 328
Sanyāsi Who Is Matādipathi And Namaskāram	... 330
The Power of 'Āśīrvādham' (Blessing)	... 331
Nārāyaṇa Is The Basis For The Power of Āśīrvādham	... 332
Lifting The Hand As A Sign of 'Āśīrvādham'	... 332
His Prayers And The Faith of The Devotees	... 333
High Status	... 334
One Who Does Namaskāram Is Fortunate	.. 337
Namaskāram By Sanyāsi:	... 337
The Principle Underlying 'Dhandam'	... 338
'Dhandam' Carried By A Sanyāsi	... 339
When Humility Attains Fullness	... 340
The Living Great Command More Respect	... 341
His Misfortune	... 342
For Humility To Grow	... 343
The Internal And External Rise And Fall of Man	... 344
Bowing The Head To Reduce Ego	... 345
Why Fall Flat With Face Down?	... 345
Sāshtāṅga Namaskāram	... 346
Panchāṅga Namaskāram - Greatness of Motherhood	... 349
Vaṇakkam	... 350

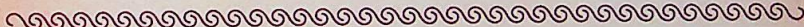
Men Also Can Do Panchānga Namaskāram	...	350
Love For The Country And Parochialism	...	351
Archana In Tamil	...	352
Valour And Obeisance	...	357
Obedience; Śuśrusha	...	360
Pranīpātham (Pranāmam)	...	360
Abhivādhanam	...	362
Before And After The Name of God:	...	369
No Abhivādhanam To A Sanyāsi	...	370
Doing Anjali; Shaking Hands	...	371
When Holding Hands Becomes Holy	...	374
Holding The Hand And 'Dhāṇḍam'	...	376
Culture That Distinguishes Between Men And Women	...	377
Types of Anjali	...	378
Pradhakshinām	...	379
The Mahāswāmi Continues	...	380
Movement of The Planets And Our Pradhakshinām	...	382
Namaskāram Which Follows Pradhakshinām	...	385
Rules of Śāstrhās Which Transcend Rationality	...	386
The Greatness of Humility	...	387
Those Entitled To Namaskāram : Age Limit	...	387
Single 'Namah' - Not Uttered	...	388
What Gives Even Final Release	...	389
Namaskāram Is Useful By Itself	...	393

Manaskāram	...	393
Economic Prosperity - Not An End Itself	...	393
Exceptions*	...	395
Namaskāram Which Removes Darkness	...	395
9) MANGALĀRATHTHI	...	397
HANUMĀN THE JNĀNI AND HIS JNĀNA GURU	...	399





MANGALĀRAMBHAM





VINĀYAKĀ AND TAMIL

Even when a deity is worshipped in all parts of India it happens that devotees of a particular deity in a region make a claim of exclusive relationship with that deity. Thus the Tamils claim such a relationship with Murugan (*Subrahmaṇya*). They consider Murugan a Tamil god and the god for their language also. But I feel that there is enough reason to give this status to *Vināyakā* also. I feel that the brothers should not be separated but worshipped together.

As if to add to the prevailing politics of separatism and exclusivism some intellectuals and researchers make two wrong claims. One is that worship of *Vināyakā* was introduced to Tamil Nadu following the wars between the *Pallavās* of *Kānchī* and the *Chālukyās* of *Vāthāpi*, when a commander of the *Pallavā* army of Narasimha Varman, by name *Paranjōthi* (who later became a *Śaiva* saint) brought the *Vināyakā* from *Vāthāpi*. The other claim is that Murugan is exclusively a Tamil god and He has been borrowed by the North and made to look different by creating *purāṇās* and *āgamās*. There is enough evidence to prove that both these claims are wrong. The fact is that both *Vināyakā* and *Subrahmaṇya* are the gods for the entire country.

* * *

VIGNĒŚWARA'S GREAT HELP TO TAMIL NADU

Looking to practical benefits that became available to Tamil Nadu on account of *Vignēśwara* it is He who is responsible for bringing *Kāvēri* from Kodāgu. Agasthiya Muni had kept the *Kāvēri* within his *kamaṇḍalu*. *Vignēśwara* went to Kodagu taking the form of a crow and toppled the '*kamaṇḍalu*'. *Kāvēri* flowed out into Tamil Nadu and the people of Tamil Nadu have been blessed with the waters of Mother *Kāvēri* and all the resultant benefits.

We talk of the River Valley Civilization. People living on the banks of rivers need not have to worry about their food and therefore it is possible for them to engage themselves in noble pursuits and evolve a great civilization. It is Mother *Kāvēri* who has helped the growth of such a civilization in Tamil Nadu. *Vignēswara* is responsible for this.

If due to the spiritual traditions of this land a great culture takes shape it will not be just culture, paintings, dance and music but it will be something which will help the evolution of the soul. This is where help is rendered by *Kāvēri*, *Vignēswara*. All arts like dance and music and even science have been dedicated to temples. In no other country there are such temples as in Tamil Nadu. Within Tamil Nadu also it is in the *Chōlā* region, in the territory adjoining *Kāvēri* majority of the temples are located.

The holy places where the *Śaiva* saints, Appar, Sambhandhar and Sundarar have sung in praise of the Lord are something special. They are about 274 in number. Out of these nearly 190 are on the northern or southern banks of *Kāvēri*. The holy places where the *Vaishṇava Āzhvārs* had sung are called *Divya Dēśam* and these are 108 in number. Out of these there are more in the *Chōlā* region than in other regions of Tamil Nadu. Nearly 40 are on the banks of *Kāvēri*.

* * *

IMPORTANT VAISHNAVA TEMPLES AND VIGNĒSWARA'S SPORT

Although there are not as many *Vaishṇava* temples as *Siva* temples on the banks of *Kāvēri* the most important temple of the *Vaishṇavas* namely Sri *Rangānāthā* is in *Srīrangam* on the banks of *Kāvēri*. In fact *Srīrangam* is in between *Kāvēri* and its branch called *Kollidam* and Sri *Rangānāthā* is called *Kāvēri Rangā* and *Rangarājā*.

In ancient times Sri *Rangānāthā* was being worshipped as family deity by the kings of the *Ikshvāku* dynasty in *Ayōdhyā*. The story of how the Lord came to be established in *Srīrangam* is linked to *Ramāyāna* and a *līlā* played by *Vināyakā*. When the monkeys and the *rākshasās* were leaving *Ayōdhyā* after witnessing Sri Rama's coronation, Sri Rama gave all of them costly and liberal gifts as a token of gratitude for the service rendered by them. He wanted to give something big to *Vibhīshaṇā* who had abandoned his brother and surrendered to Rama. Unlike *Sugrīva* who took refuge in Rama for retrieving his wife and kingdom, *Vibhīshaṇā* had done genuine surrender without any expectation. It was when accepting him Rama made the famous vow :

Sakrudēva prapannāya thavāsmīthi cha yāchathe

Abhayam sarvabhūthebyō dhadhāmyē thadh vratham māma

Rama thought that he must give him a very valuable gift. Supreme 'thyāgi' that he was he gave *Vibhīshaṇā* the idol of *Rangānāthā* which had been their family deity and family wealth along with the (*Praṇavākāra*) *vimāna* to be taken to *Lankā*.

Carrying the idol along with the *vimāna*, *Vibhīshaṇā* reached the banks of *Kāvēri*. *Vināyakā* who was watching this decided that Sri *Rangānāthā* should not be allowed to leave the banks of *Kāvēri*, Tamil Nadu and Bharat. He ensured it by enacting a *līlā*.

Rama had told *Vibhīshaṇā* that the idol and *Vimāna* should not be placed anywhere on the ground and that they should be carried directly to *Lankā*. He had also warned him that if they happened to be placed anywhere they would get established at that place only.

Kāvēri was in floods. *Vināyakā* created in *Vibhīshaṇā* the desire to have a dip in *Kāvēri*. He went as a *brahmachāri* boy and stood before *Vibhīshaṇā*. *Vibhīshaṇā* told *Vignēswara* 'I shall go

and have a bath in *Kāvēri*. Will you keep these (the idol and *vimāna*) in your hands without placing them on the ground till I return?’

Vignēswara told him ‘I shall do it. But if at some stage my hands cannot carry them any longer, what should I do? I will call out for you three times. If you do not come I shall place them on the ground’. *Vibhīshaṇā* agreed to the condition. When *Vibhīshaṇā* had gone far into the *Kāvēri* swimming, *Vināyakā* called out thrice in quick succession. *Vibhīshaṇā* could not come. *Vignēswara* said to himself ‘I have called out thrice. You did not come as agreed to. I am keeping this down’ and placed the idol with *vimāna* on the ground. The idol with the *vimāna* got firmly established there.

Looking at the story it would appear that both the idol and *vimāna* could have been of a size which was kept for prayer by the kings of *Ikshvāku* dynasty and must have been handy. It is possible that after being placed on the banks of *Kāvēri* the Lord must have taken a bigger form and the *vimāna* also must have become suitably big.

When *Vibhīshaṇā* returned he was disappointed and felt angry. He tried to lift the idol. But however much he tried he could not. He was angry with the *brahmachāri* boy. He advanced towards him to give him a knock on his head. *Vignēswara* ran and sat on top of the Rock Fort hill. Then out of compassion for *Vibhīshaṇā* he submitted himself to him. We cannot get hold of the Lord. The Lord has to make himself held by us just as Krishna did with *Yasōdhā*. *Vibhīshaṇā* gave a knock to the *brahmachāri* boy on his head. At that very moment the boy showed his true form as *Vināyakā*. The moment *Vibhīshaṇā* had *Vināyakā*’s *dharṣan* his anger and sorrow disappeared. *Vignēswara* told him ‘Do not feel that I have not allowed the Lord to go to *Lankā*. I have kept him in such a manner that from here he will be looking at *Lankā* and

extending his grace. Although it is not the normal practice to install the idols of the Lord so as to face the South I am doing it here'.

* * *

THREE DEITIES WHICH FACE THE SOUTH: AMITY BETWEEN ŚAIVAM AND VAISHNĀVAM

It is *Paramēswara* as *Dakṣiṇāmūrthi* and *Natarājā* who face the South. Now *Vignēswara* has made *Mahā Vishṇu* also face the South. *Dakṣiṇāmūrthi* sits like a statue 'in *dhyāna*'. *Natarājā* keeps dancing and makes the entire affairs of the world a happy dance. *Mahā Vishṇu* who is in the reclining posture is also in the state of '*samādhi*' like *Dakṣiṇāmūrthi* but with the name of sleep. Why then his state is not called '*samādhi*' but is called sleep? He is a great magician who does all *indrajāls* which we cannot understand. Therefore even when he is in '*samādhi*' he will do the *srushti* of this universe just as we create people, places, incidents etc in our dream state. That is why the universe is said to be his dream. There can be dream only if there is sleep. That is why the *samādhi* is called sleep. Another reason is that instead of being in *samādhi* sitting erect, he is in the reclining posture. But in order to distinguish his sleep from ours, it is said to be '*Yōga Nidhra*'.

Due to the greatness of *Vignēswara*'s hands and his great thought that what applied to *Śiva* should apply equally to *Vishṇu Rangarājā* whom he installed became the king among all the deities of all the *Vaishṇava* holy places. The place where he got established came to be called *Srīrangam*.

I think I have said it slightly differently. It is not correct to say that the place became Rangam because of *Rangarājā* being there. Because the place is called Rangam the one who rules as the king there is called *Rangarājā*. When the kings of the *Ikshvāku* dynasty upto the time of Rama were worshipping him, his name

would have been *Nārāyaṇā* or *Vishṇu* or *Sēshaṣāyi* or *Ananthaṣāyi*. Only when *Vināyakā* created a Rangam for him between the *Kāvēris* he must have got the name of *Rangarājā*.

Rangam (or arangam in Tamil) is a stage where dance or drama is performed along with the hall where people gather to witness it. The great drama actor who conducts the drama of the world as an imagination of his dream has to stage the drama in a Rangam. When as *Paramēswara* he does the same thing as dance in Chidambaram his sannidhi is called '*Sabhā*'. It is called '*Chith Sabhā*'. Ordinary people call it '*Kanaka Sabhā*'. Here *Sabhā* has the same meaning as Rangam.

Vignēswara thought that if his father who is dancing has a *Sabhā* for his temple his uncle (*Vishṇu*) who enacts the drama of the universe through dream should also have one. He thought that although the principle is the same there will be beauty only if there is difference in names and therefore gave the name Rangam to the sannidhi of the *Mūrthi* which he installed.

* * *

THE TRUTH AND APPROPRIATENESS OF VINĀYAKĀ'S LĪLĀ

I do not remember what is said in the *Sthala Purāṇa* of *Srīrangam*. I only remember that since it is the *sthala purāṇa* of *Vaishṇavas* there is no mention in it of the role played by *Vignēswara*. There was a *Chōlā* king by name Dharma Varma who was a contemporary of Rama. The first corridor around the sanctum sanctorum (*mūlasthānam*) is named after Dharma Varman. He had performed penance for a long time to have the deity worshipped by the *Ikshvāku* kings in his own kingdom. Therefore when *Vibhīṣaṇā* placed the idol and *vimāna* on the ground for taking rest, it got firmly established there itself - this is what I remember has been said in it. But the account that is

popular is that the idol got installed there due to *Vignēswara's* *līlā*. The story is also pleasing because it reconciles the two great sects in our religion namely *Saiva* and *Vaishṇava*. The story as it progresses further also confirms the truth of it.

We have seen that *Vignēswara* ran to the top of the Rock Fort. *Vibhīṣhaṇā* chased him and gave him a knock on his head. In support of this version we find that on the idol of *Vignēswara* on top of the Rock Fort there is the mark of the knock. It is rare that *Vināyakā* remains on top of a hillock. It is appropriate to say that he ran to the top of the hill so that he would not be caught by *Vibhīṣhaṇā*. There is also in this a great metaphysical meaning related to *Yōga Śāstrā*. It is the principle of the '*Mūlādhāra*' being joined with the '*Sahasrāra*' in the top.

There is one more thing appropriate about Sri *Rangānāthā* having connection with *Vignēswara*. It was *Vignēswara* who made the *Kāvēri* flow by tilting *Agasthyā's* '*kamaṇḍalu*'. He did it by taking the form of a crow. *Agasthyā* went chasing the crow. The crow then changed its form to that of a *brahmachāri*. In *Vibhīṣhaṇā's* story also we find that *Vignēswara* became a *brahmachāri*. *Agasthyā* had chased him only to give a knock on the head but before he could do that *Vignēswara* showed his true form. It was then that *Agasthyā* reacted. Oh! It is you! And I was going to deliver a knock on your head' and knocked himself on the head. The story goes that it was after this incident that *Vignēswara* made this (knocking on the head) as an important part of worship.

When *Vignēswara* had tilted *Agasthyā's* *kamaṇḍalu* and made the *Kāvēri* flow it was in *Sahyadhri* from beneath a tree of '*amla*'. The source of *Kāvēri* is beneath the *amla* tree. That *amla* tree is *Mahā Viṣṇu*. It was an aspect of *Viṣṇu-māyā* that became the woman '*Lopamudhrā*' who became *Agasthyā's* wife and then became the water in *Agasthyā's* *kamaṇḍalu*.

When *Kāvēri* flowed from the feet of *Bhagawān* he told her 'Gangā also flowed from my feet. But you are more beloved of me than her. She had only the touch of my feet. I now bless that you should get the touch of my whole body. When you flow as a great river you will separate into two and then on the island where you become one again you will embrace me with both hands'.

There is another incident which balances *Śaivism* and *Vaishṇavam*. If *Vibhīshaṇā* had obtained from Rama the idol of *Rangānāthā* (who is his own original form) *Rāvaṇā* had obtained from *Paramēśwara* the 'Āthma Lingam' which is *Paramēśwara*'s own form. When he carried it to *Lankā* the Lord had told him that he should not keep it anywhere on the ground before reaching *Lankā*. Then also it was *Vignēśwara* who played sport and ensured that the Lingam did not leave this country. The place where the Lingam got established is *Gōkarṇam*. It is a holy place on the Western shore in Karnataka. It is an island like *Dwāraka* and *Rāmēswaram*. The Lord there is called 'Mahābhalēswar'. Once *Vignēśwara* installed the Lingam there *Rāvaṇā* with all his might could not take it off from the ground. Since even *Rāvaṇā* was made powerless the Lord is called *Mahābhalēswar*. *Vignēśwara* did not allow the Lingam to be carried away to *Lankā*. Would he allow *Vibhīshaṇā* to carry away the idol of *Rangānāthā* to *Lankā*? There is therefore truth in the story about the role played by *Vignēśwara* in regard to *Rangānāthā* having been established in *Srīrangam*.

* * *

THE EXCLUSIVE FEATURE OF BHARAT

Why did *Vignēśwara* think that the idols of deities should not go out of Bharat? Is it fair or just?

When a plant or tree is watered it is not the branch or the flower that is watered but the root. So far as matters of divinity are

concerned our Bharat is like the root of the huge tree called the world. It is only the watering of the root that provides the energy to all parts of the tree. In the same manner, it is only the *pūjā* performed in Bharat that will provide the strength and vitality for other countries also.

In his creation the Lord has ordained that there should be good climate in a particular country, good crops and greenery in some, diamond, gold and other valuable minerals in some etc. In some countries it will be extremely cold and in some other extremely hot. Some countries are prosperous due to the fertility of the soil. Countries which have plenty help others by exporting to them. In matters of divinity and spirituality Bharat is like the power house for the whole world. Just as the heart supplies blood to whole body, it is Bharat that provides the life force of spirituality, dharma and soul. This does not mean that there need be no worship in other countries. Just as we apply medicines to individual parts of the body to cure the ailment of particular part, worship has to be done in other countries too. But just as the heart has to be in good condition for any ailment to be cured, only if worship is done in Bharat according to the rules laid down it will produce good not only for our country but for all other countries.

* * *

WORSHIP ACCORDING TO PRESCRIBED PROCEDURE AND DEVOTIONAL WORSHIP

There are two types of bhakthi - *Vaidhēya* bhakthi and *Rāga* bhakthi. *Vaidhēya* bhakthi is worship according to rules and procedures prescribed by *sāsthrās*. *Rāga* bhakthi does not follow any such procedure but the devotee shows his love to the Lord in any manner he likes. It is also called *Anurāga* bhakthi. Since the tendency these days is not to feel bound by any rules or disciplines people imagine that they have *rāga* bhakthi and that therefore they

need not have to do anything according to the rules. The truth is that we do not have such surging love towards the Lord. If only we had it we would have been entirely different. We will have the attitude of total surrender to the Lord, giving up all attachments and as a reflection of our love to the Lord we will have love to all creatures.

According to *sāsthrās* *Vaidhēya* bhakthi also should be practiced only with love and not in a dry or mechanical way. I said that doing worship according to prescribed rules is *Vaidhēya* bhakthi. One of the basic rules is that there should be love. *Āthma pūjā* has to be first performed and then only *pūjā* should be performed to the idol. The rule for *āthmā pūjā* is : 'The body of the one who does the *pūjā* is the temple of God; the one who does the *pūjā* is himself the God who is worshipped; just as the old flowers are removed and fresh *pūjā* started the *ajnāna* that the worshipper is different from the worshipped should be removed and *pūjā* should be performed with the thought 'I am He Himself, the 'Sō aham attitude' :

Dēhō dhēvālayah prōkthō jīvō dēvah sanāthanah
Thyajēth ajnāna nirmālyam sō(a)ham bhāvēna pūjayēth

Thus when he himself is we, how much love should we not show him? Although we claim close relationship with many and show love to them are we not closest to ourselves?

But only for the short time during which we recite the above *śloka* we may have great love to him because he is we ourselves. But it is not found possible to maintain it all the time. When people say these days that they are like that or can remain like that it is false talk. Not submitting to rules is being branded as *rāga* bhakthi.

I do admit that except for those who are totally atheists all people will have some love to *Bhagawān*. That love also is not without its effect. The *rāga* bhakthi of all people in all countries

will certainly be doing good. But such good will be only minimal. If the capital invested is small the return from it will also be meagre.

The rules and procedures for worship, the *manthrās*, *sthōthrās*, the rituals, observance of personal purity and *āchārās* by themselves will do substantial good whether there is love or not. As we progress these rules and procedures themselves will develop in our heart the love for *Īswara*.

Therefore if there is to be worldly and spiritual welfare on a big scale it is only developing the attitude of love that is appropriate for our present state. The Lord blesses only some people with *Anurāga* bhakthi of the extreme kind by which they can be one with the Lord. Other people have to strengthen and develop their little *Anurāga* bhakthi by the divine power attached to the *sthōthrās* and *manthrās* which have come down to us according to rules. Thus what is appropriate to most people is *Vaidhēya* bhakthi, practiced with some basic love.

In *Vaidhēya* bhakthi there are rules and procedures in different countries according to the religions followed there. They too have the power to obtain divine grace. But *Bhagawān* has ordained that such power is more for the *Vēdha manthrās*, the *manthrās* of *Āgama* worship flowing from them, the *sthōthrās*, rituals etc. Apart from these he has also ordained that these yield best results only here in Bharat. If it is asked why it is so how can this be answered? There can only be the counter question: Why has he blessed Switzerland with such fine climate but has made Sahara so hot? Even if we cannot find answers we have to accept the reality.

It is our land which is called '*Karma bhūmi*' and it is here the power of the *manthrās* yield the full benefits. When I say *Karmā* here it means *Śāsthṛā karmā* in which *manthrās* are involved. It is because *Vignēswara* had felt that only if the *Āthma* Lingam or the

idol of *Rangānāthā* remain in Bharat it will be good for *Lankā* and all countries and therefore performed his *līlā*.

Thus the *kshēthra* which *Vignēswara* has established between the two wings of *Kāvēri* (*Ubhaya Kāvēri*) has become the most important of the *Vishṇu kshēthras* and the central gem of the *Śiva-Vishṇu* temples on the banks of *Kāvēri* in the *Chōlā* region.

* * *

GROWTH OF CULTURE ONLY DUE TO GANĒŚA

I have talked about holy places connected with the (*Śaiva*), *Thēvāram* and (*Vaishṇava*) *Divya Prabhandham*. Apart from these the number of temples on the banks of *Kāvēri* which are not particularly connected with the *Śaiva* or *Vaishṇava* saints are in thousands. If Tamil Nadu is called 'the land divine' and is full of temples and it is said that the Dravida land is the land for bhakthi, the reason is *Kāvēri* which has been gifted by *Vignēswara*. All fine arts (music, dance, painting, sculpture etc) have developed related to divinity and culture has grown to an extent that the world is proud of. So *Vignēswara* is responsible for this.

* * *

ONE WHO HAS THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF TEMPLES

Tamil Nadu has built a large number of temples for *Vignēswara* who has himself blessed it with several temples. There are temples for *Vignēswara* in every nook and corner to an extent not there for other deities. Even if all the *Vignēswara* temples which are in other States are added up they will not equal the number in Tamil Nadu. Maharashtra is the main place for *Gāṇapadhyam* - the worship of *Vignēswara* as the Supreme God. But in the matter of number of temples for *Vignēswara* Maharashtra will lag behind Tamil Nadu.

* * *

VINĀYAKĀ AND TAMIL

Language is an important component of culture. It is only with language different kinds of books - those dealing with religion, development of knowledge, stories, poetry, ethics etc - are written. For Tamil language *Vignēswara* is very important. When we start writing anything - it may be even a list of provisions we purchase from the grocery - we first make on top the symbol appropriate to *Vignēswara* (called *Pillaiyār* symbol in Tamil). This is meant to ensure that we do not fail in the work taken on hand. In no other language of any region including Sanskrit there is a word that represents the symbol of '*Mangalārambam*'. It is the good fortune of Tamil to have such a word. *Arunagirinādhār* (Tamil saint) has said (in his *Thiruppugazh*) that ages back *Vignēswara* has written the three branches of Tamil (Literature and grammar, music and drama) on the Mount *Mēru*. It appears from his song that *Vignēswara* has written this much before he wrote the *Mahābhāratha* for *Vyāsā*.

At the very start of education, children learn the *upadēśās* of *Avvai* (Tamil saint poetess). She says in one of her verses - getting hold of the feet of *Vignēswara*, it give us good heart, good speech and the blessings of *Mahā Vishṇu*. She says that *Vignēswara* can be worshipped without any physical strain. Neither fasting nor *Hata yōga* is necessary. It is enough if a few flowers are placed at his feet. She describes him as being red like coral. It is said that the son is like the mother. Our Mother when She is *Kāmākshī* is also red in colour.

* * *

THE GRACE THAT GIVES GOOD MIND AND SPEECH - FROM DHARMA AND UPTO MÔKSHA

The Lord who has created the beings in millions of species has blessed only the humans with speech. *Avvai* tells children that

it is *Vignēswara* who is the cause of speech. Like speech the sense of discrimination between the good and the bad is given only to the humans. *Īswara* has given the mind which can have the freedom to follow either. It is *Vignēswara*, says Avvai, who blesses us to have good mind and go the right way.

If our mind has to melt and speak good words it will be necessary to show the good path to be followed. That good path is called '*Dharma mārṅa*'. Avvai has given a book of teaching which shows the good path. In that also she offers prayers first to *Vignēswara* saying that she would offer him four things like milk, honey etc and that he should bless her with 'Three' (that is the three branches of Tamil).

The good path is called *Sadhgathi*. This does not end with leading a good life. When it is felt that life is enough and great men pray for *Sadhgathi* it is what comes in the end - the *mōksha mārṅa*.

Of the four *purushārthās* (worthwhile objectives) what starts with dharma should attain fullness in *mōksham*. It is *Vignēswara* who lifted Avvai with his trunk and straightaway placed her in Kailas.

* * *

SANSKRIT AND TAMIL

Right from the earliest times, from the time of *Tholkāppiam* which is the oldest Tamil classic, our Tamil ancestors did not hesitate to draw freely from Sanskrit. Tamil has always had a rich vocabulary of its own. Yet, whenever the need arose for finding new a word, our great ancestors did not want to coin words in an artificial manner but preferred to adopt words from Sanskrit in the thought 'Sanskrit is also natural to us. It is something like second nature to us. We will take words from that which has become an inseparable part of our roots.

There can be no one who has contributed more to the glory of Tamil than *Thiruvalluvar*. His *Kural*s (two line verses) have a liberal sprinkling of Sanskrit words or Tamil words which have Sanskrit root. His very first *Kural* speaks of *Ādhi Bhagawan* and *Ulagu* which are Sanskrit words. The word 'Ulagu' (world) is derived from the Sanskrit *lōkam*. *Lōkam* is what is seen by us. Even the English word 'look' is derived from this root. The organ which does the act of seeing, the eye, is called '*lōchanam*' which is also from the same root. It was not as if *Thiruvalluvar* could not have found a few Tamil words in the place of these three words. But because of his broad-mindedness, he did not consider language differences and used Sanskrit words in the very first verse which is part of the Chapter of prayer to the Lord.

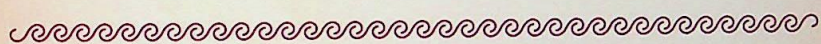
Tamil friends who are keen to de-Sanskritise Tamil are not doing any service to Tamil. As a matter of fact even after the so called de-Sanskritisation it will be seen that the new words also have Sanskrit roots. For example those who thought that the word 'manthri' is Sanskrit started using the word 'Amaichchar' instead, thinking that it is pure Tamil. The truth is that the word *Amaichchar* is derived from the Sanskrit root '*Amāthyar*', meaning a minister. They have changed '*abhimānam*' into '*nēyam*'. But the so called Tamil word '*nēyam*' is also a distorted form of the Sanskrit word '*snēham*'.

There is the case of a person who wrote a '*vijnāpan*' to an important politician. It appears that the dignitary got annoyed and asked the person to change '*vijnāpan*' to '*viññappam*'. But this too, like '*nēyam*' mentioned above, has the Sanskrit root. The Sanskrit '*vijnāpan*' becomes '*viññappam*' in *Prākṛuth* (unrefined Sanskrit usually spoken by inferior actors in Sanskrit dramas). It will also come as '*Viññapam*'.

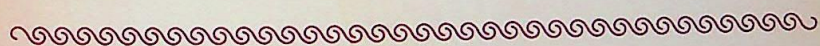
Any number of such examples can be given. But we should not get annoyed with those who do this de-Sanskritisation thinking

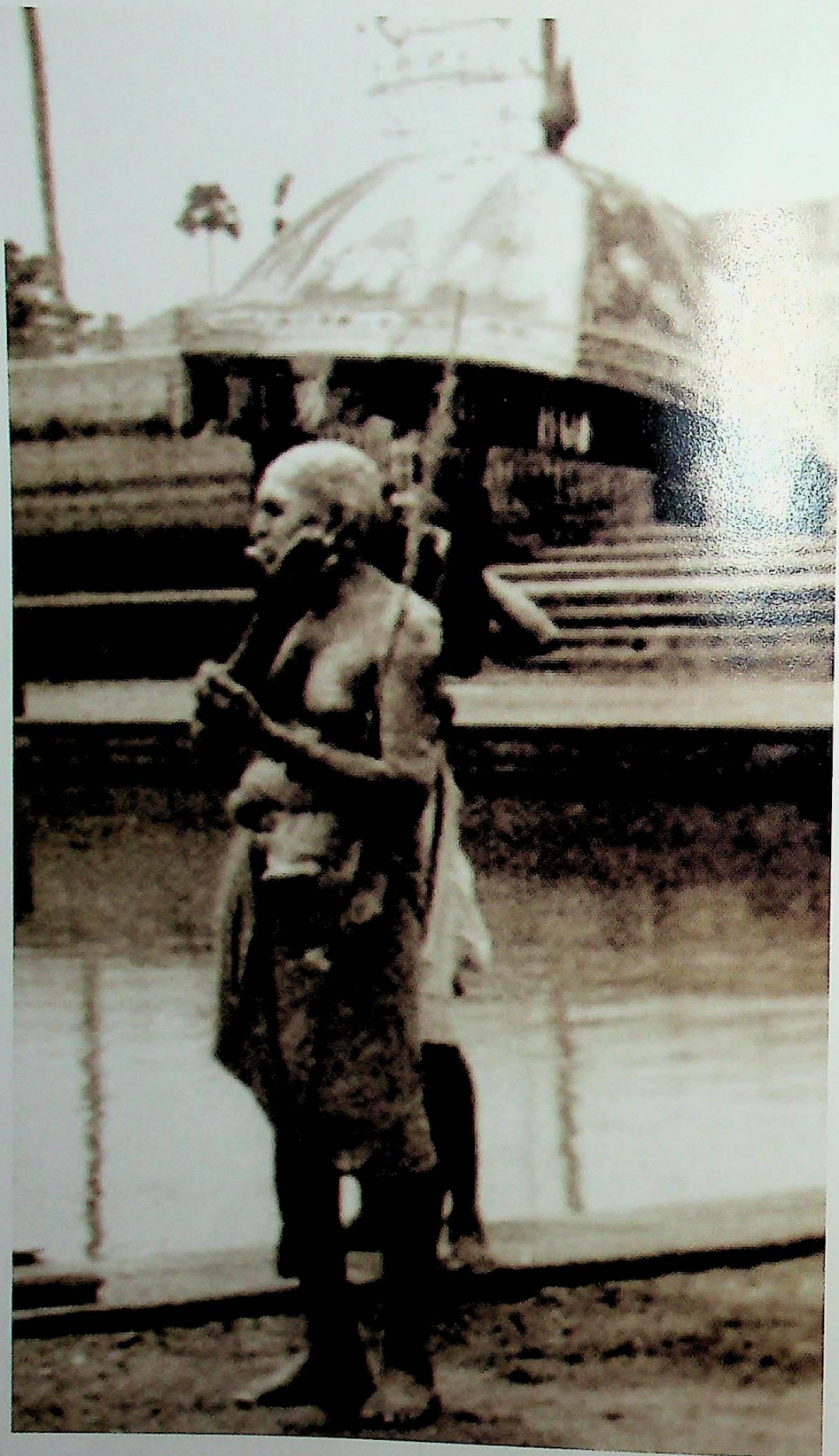
that it is a great service to Tamil. We have to explain to them politely and pray to *Vāgdēvi*. We have to pray to *Vignēswara* who wrote *Vyāsā's Mahābhāratham* and the three branches of our Tamil on the mountain that he must bless us so that we do not fight over Sanskrit and Tamil both of which are like our two eyes.

* * *



GURU





THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GURU AND THE ŚISHYA

Our great ancestors right from the rishis who have given us the Upanishads had laid down how the relationship should be between a guru and *śishya*.

To those who give us knowledge we give several names such as guru, *āchāryā*, *dhēśikar*, *upādhyāyā*, *adhyaksha*, *purōhit* etc. What has been emphasized in our tradition is that he should not give mere knowledge but knowledge which is of the right kind. Guru is one who even when helping the growth of knowledge ensures that it is of a kind that is not used for bad purposes but used only to follow the path of dharma. The same applies to *āchāryā*, *adhyaksha*, *upādhyāyā*, *purōhit* and *dhēśikar*. We generally use all these names to mean the same thing. But these have been distinguished on the basis of different characteristics. Although basically it is the function of all these people to guide the *śishya* on the right path, depending on the methods followed in doing this they have been defined differently. This can also be stated in another way. Depending on the functions of the great persons, depending on each aspect, a name and definition has been given. The definition is in the form of the following *śloka*. Scholars generally know that guru means one who removes darkness:

*Gu kāras dwandhakārah syāth ru kāras thannivarthakah
Anthahkāra nirōdhithvāth gururithyuchyathē bhudhaih*

‘Gu’ is darkness. ‘Ru’ is what removes it. The meaning of the *śloka* is that because the guru removes the darkness he is called as such by knowledgeable people. ‘*Anthahkāra*’ is the darkness of *ajnāna*. Removal of this darkness means experiencing the *Brahmam* which is ‘*jñāna jyōthis*’. This is the meaning when education is of the highest level, namely, acquiring *Brahma*

Vidhyā. If education refers to a kind which everyone receives normally, it means the guru removes their ignorance in arts and science and enlightens them in these branches.

There is another definition which is known by very few people:

*Gakārah siddhidhah prōkthō rēpah pāpasya hārahah
Wokārō Vishnūravakthas thrithayāthmā guruh smruthah*

In the word 'Guru' 'Ga' (Sanskrit) and 'Wo' (pronounced as the way 'Wo' is pronounced in 'Wolf') make 'Gu' and 'Ra' and 'Wo' make 'Ru'. The word has been split into four sounds 'ga' 'wo' 'ra' 'wo' and the import of 'ga' 'ra' and 'wo' have been given as meaning in the above *ślōka*.

The *ślōka* ends by saying that guru has that form which is the meaning of 'ga' 'ra' and 'wo': '*Thrithayāthma Guruh Smruthah* : Guru is considered the coming together of the three'.

'Ga' : Bestows siddhi. Siddhi means achieving the goal fully - whatever (*Vidhyā*) is learnt to stick to its goal without slipping is siddhi.

The aksharas (Sanskrit alphabets) have within them many powers. It is by using them that *manthrās* have come into existence. The *ślōka* says that the very sound 'ga' has the power to give siddhi : *Gakārah siddhidhah prōkthah*. Because it is said like this it would not mean that even if the guru does not teach properly or the *śishya* does not learn properly the guru will attain siddhi in teaching and the *śishya* will attain siddhi in learning it. Whatever effort needs to be made has to be made in the proper way. Even when so doing sometimes obstacles do come up. We do not attain siddhi but meet with failure. Divine grace is necessary to prevent such a situation arising. Of the many means that give divine help the power of the sound (sabdhā *sakthi*) is one. That is what 'ga' does.

‘Ga’ has greatness. To ensure that there is no rebirth, that is to attain *mōksha* if the four names which begin with ‘ga’ are meditated upon in the heart it is enough. They are :

*Gītā, Gangā cha Gāyathrī Gōvindhēthi hrudhi sthithe **

(* the second half of the *ślōka* is : *Chathur gakāra samyukthe punar-janma na Vidhyathe*)

They are the four names - *Gītā, Gangā, Gāyathrī* and *Gōvindhā* which begin with ‘Ga’. In the northern parts of our country there is the practice of repeating these names early in the morning on getting up. What is said here is that the four names which bestow birthlessness begin with ‘ga’. In the previous *ślōka* which describes the characteristics of a guru it is said that the sound ‘ga’ ensures achievement of the goal : ‘*Gakārah siddhidhah prōkthah*’ ‘*Rēpah pāpasya hārah*’ : The sound of the alphabet ‘ra’ destroys sin.

* * *

‘RA’ WHICH DESTROYS SIN

The alphabet ‘Ga’ indicates that the Guru grants *siddhi* to the *śishya*. ‘Ra’ indicates that he removes his sin. Just as a thing is reduced to ashes by fire, he reduces his sin to nothing. ‘Rum’ is the ‘*Bhījam*’ for ‘agni’ (fire). There are five aksharas each of which contains within itself the power of one of the five elements (*pancha bhūthah*) - they are called *Bhīja Aksharam*. *Bhījam* is a seed. Just as a small seed has within itself a huge tree the alphabets which contain within themselves divine powers are called *Bhīja aksharam*. For Pruthvi it is ‘lam’. For ‘Appu’ it is ‘vam’. For ‘*Thēyu*’ it is ‘rum’. For *Vāyu* it is ‘yam’ and for *ākāśa* it is ‘ham’.

‘*Rēpah*’ represents the principle of agni. Just as fire reduces a thing to ashes ‘*rēpah*’ reduces sins to nothingness. *Rama nāma* which is glorified as ‘*Thāraka nāma*’ begins with ‘*Rēpah*’.

‘WO’ IS THE FORM OF MAHĀ VISHNŪ

Since ‘Wo’ is a component of both ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’ in Guru there must be something special about it. The explanation given for it is ‘*Wokārō Vishnūravyakthah*’ : ‘Wo’ is the form of *Mahā Vishnū*.

Praṇava (aum) pronounced as ‘om’ is the form of *Trimūrthi*. It is formed by the three alphabets ‘a’ (pronounced as in ‘and’), ‘wo’ (pronounced as in ‘wolf’) and ‘ma’. These three alphabets represent *Brahma*, *Vishnū* and *Rudra* respectively.

‘*Wokārō Vishnūravyakthah*’ : The alphabet ‘wo’ is of the form of *Vishnū* who remains unseen.

Vyaktham is what is explicit. Avyaktham is not what is explicit. The universe (prapancham) which has come out of *Brahmam* as its manifestation is ‘vyaktham’. The supporting truth (*ādhāra sathyam*) from which this ‘vyaktham’ came is *Brahmam* which is not seen. It is from that this universe of multiplicity manifested. Also that *Brahmam* is within the prapancham and with everything in it. When it is said ‘it is inside’ it means it is not seen. That means it is not ‘vyaktham’. What is not vyaktham is avyaktham. That means it is *Brahmam*.

When *Brahma Vidhyā Sāsthṛā* is interpreted in accordance with *Sāṅkya Sāsthṛā* it will not be said that ‘avyaktham’ is *Brahmam* but it will be said that it is the basic ingredient of the prapancham called the ‘*mūla māyā*’. But to interpret it so technically will not be appropriate here. Vyaktham is the world which is seen. Avyaktham is the unseen *Paramāthmā*. This is what is appropriate here.

* * *

VISHŌU, VĀSUDĒVĀ - THE TERMS EXPLAINED

Having said that the alphabet 'Vo' is *Vishŋu* it is immediately followed by the statement that *Vishŋu* is *avyaktham*. That is He is Parabrahmam.

I have spoken about Rudra, *Mahēswara* - *Sadāśiva*. Here *Vishŋu* has been shown as the *Brahmam* which has within itself all these three. Brahma who is 'a' is also within this. Everyone knows that he is *Vishŋu*'s son.

It has been the practice from ancient times to refer to both *Mahā Vishŋu* and *Paramaśiva* of the *Thrimūrtis* as Parabrahmam. The reason why it is so in practice is because several great persons had experienced this themselves. What they have seen and experienced they have given to the world as *manthrās*, *sthōthrās* and *upadēśās*.

The direct meaning of *Vishŋu* - the root meaning obtained by splitting the word into letters - is 'one who is omnipresent'. *Āchāryā* has commented on the term *Vishŋu* as '*Brahmam* which is omnipresent, *Paramāthmā*, *Vāsudēvā*'. The reason why he has said *Vāsudēvā* is that this also means one who is omnipresent. *Āchāryā* makes this clear when commenting on '*Vāsudēvā*' in *Vishŋu Sahasranāmam*. He has explained the term '*Vāsu*' as '*Vasathi Vāsayathi Āchchāthayathi Sarvam*'. The Lord being in everything is '*Vasathi*'. Since all things are in him it is *Vāsayathi*. This would mean that he is omnipresent. Yet such a *Paramāthmā* which is omnipresent cannot be seen by us. He calls it '*Sarvam Āchchāthayathi*'. '*Āchchāthayathi*' means 'covering and hiding' - reality being hidden by *māyā*.

Āchāryā who would never say anything that is not part of *Vēdhic* tradition. In order to make it clear that what he says is not his own opinion or view, would show that it is part of tradition and also show authority from *Śāsthrā*. Here he has quoted authority from *Mahābhāratham* and *VishŋuPurāṇam*.

When we talk of omnipresence what is understood is 'it is what we see - that is vyaktham - that whole; that which embraces all that whole is what is avyaktham which we cannot see. It is only when it is something particular, it is seen openly. Instead, if it is said that it is present in the whole then that whole will be the vyaktham which can be seen; what is in the whole will be avyaktham. When sugar is dissolved in a glassful of water is it not avyaktham?

That hidden thing is avyaktham in two ways - because it remains hidden and also because it is the inner meaning of the *Vēdhās*. Such a hidden thing is *Vishṇu*. Such a *Vishṇu*'s form is the alphabet (akshara swarūpam) 'wo' - *Wokārō Vishṇuravyakthah*'.

The *ślōka* says : 'Wo' which is as *Vishṇu* and avyaktham and avyaktham which is *Vishṇu* by combining with 'Ga' which blesses the attainment of goal and with 'Ra' which removes the sin and purifies becomes the word 'Guru'.

When the term 'as *Vishṇu*' is understood as 'omnipresence' the entire universe is there. It means that he is as antharyami in this. In saying this there is *Visishtādhvaitham*. When that *Vishṇu* is said to be avyaktham it means *Nirguṇa Brahman* which is Adhvaitham. Since the *upadēsam* is for us who are experiencing the state of duality, Dwaitham also comes in!

* * *

WHAT THE ŚISHYA GAINS FROM GURU'S QUALITIES

Guru apart from blessing the *śishya* with the attainment of goal and removing all sins and purifying is also omnipresent, is quality-less and avyaktham - this is how the *ślōka* has defined. It may be asked 'all right, we need to attain the goal. Guru makes it possible for us. Since siddhi cannot be attained unless the sins are

wiped out, to say that he removes the sins is also all right. Both these are useful to us. If he is omnipresent and over and above that he is avyaktham in what way is that useful to us? Merely saying that he is like that will be useful to us. How is that?

Guru is there to raise a *śishya* to his level just as the wasp keeps stinging the worm and makes it gain its own form. Therefore if his characteristics are mentioned it would mean that he is blessing us so that we too acquire the same characteristics. That itself is of great benefit to us. The *ślōka* started with 'siddhi pradham'. This is that siddhi.

* * *

ADHVAITHAM AND THE ASPECT OF ANUGRAHAM (GRACE)

By the grace of the Brahma *Vidhyā* guru who is in the non-dual state of Adhvaitham that siddhi will materialize for the *śishya* also. It is the attainment of the highest goal which is the final state in which everything goes.

If that be so, why should the state of *Vishṇu* being omnipresent be mentioned? It is here that compassion (*Karuṇā*) and love (*prēma*) come in. When a great person (*mahān*) who has attained the non-dual state, instead of remaining in *samādhi* has come as a guru it means he has 'come down' to the state of multiplicity. Why did he do that? It is because of compassion and love. He has come down and gives *upadēśam* because of his compassion that the bliss that he has attained should be attained by all in the world.

If it is asked whether in fact he 'comes down' it cannot be said to be so. One who has completely destroyed his mind and has had the experience of *Brahmam* '*Brahmānubhuvam*' does not come down from that state. Yet, we cannot say why and how. No

one has explained it till now. We see several instances in which great ones who had reached the highest stage of spiritual attainment, even when continuing to remain in that state without any disturbance, looked at the world and with great compassion to lead it on the right path taken on the role of the guru and given *upadēsam*. Several '*Brahmanishtās*' including *Āchāryā*, *Śukāchāryā* and others were like that. If it is asked how and why they were so the answer is that we do not know. It is all *Ambāl*'s action.

The sadhguru who like the wasp that repeatedly stings a worm and makes it into itself gives adhwaitha siddhi to a good *śishya*, guides the majority of people who are in the world of duality on the right path.

I make it clear again. Because the guru is connected with the world it does not mean that he has developed the dwaitha view (duality). The guru seems to be engaged in worldly activities but he sees the one Adhvaitham within the world of duality (Dwaitha Prapancham). He has not 'come down'. He appears to have come down. This is our perception. In his own experience there is neither coming down now going up. He does not see duality of the universe as totally different from *Brahmam* but sees that the Adhwaitha *Brahmam* pervades everything; that is he experiences that *Brahmam* is in everything as *Vishṇu* and taken the form of Guru and gives *upadēsam*. There is a great bliss in that compassion which is a mixture of the Dwaitha and Adhwaitha bliss. It is bliss which is founded on Adhvaitham. It is a bliss which is experienced without slipping from the highest state, bliss which is beyond description.

This is also blessed by him to the *śishya*. When he does this he enables the *śishya* to become a guru himself and gives *upadēsam* for the good of the world. It is an act of grace in which there is the peace of Adhvaitham (Adhwaitha *Śāntham*) inside. That is how

Mahā Vishṇu rules the world. What the guru does is to manage the world of *śiṣhyas*.

* * *

MAHĀ VISHṆU AS THE GURU

We, the ‘*smārthas*’ (who follow *Sri Śāṅkara Bhagavadhpadhā*) recite the *Guru paramparā* for the *Brahma Vidhyā sampradhāya* starting with ‘*Nārāyaṇām Padmabhuvam*’. Therefore, referring here to the first guru, *Vishṇu* is very appropriate. In *Sahasranāma* he has been given the names *Guru* and *Gurudhaman*. *Gurudhaman* means greater than all other gurus. *Āchāryā* in his ‘*bāshyam*’ here says that since *Mahā Vishṇu* gives *upadēsam* of all *Vidhyās* he is guru and also because he creates all the beings he is guru.

From this it can be understood that it is the practice to refer to the father (who gives birth to progeny) as guru. Those who are well versed in Sanskrit literature know that father is also called guru.

* * *

FATHER - GURU

All are aware of the general saying : *Māthā, Pithā, Guru, Deivam* (God). Of these, both the mother and father perform the guru’s function of guiding on the right path. In early childhood the mother teaches good things in an agreeable and pleasant manner. Then upto the age of eight when the boy is entrusted to a guru after performing ‘*upanayanam*’ the father teaches the boy the right things with some strictness. Therefore, he has got the name guru.

When guru is understood as a word by itself without splitting into alphabets it only means an elder. The elder in the family is the father who is the head of the family. Therefore, he is guru.

GURU TOO HAS THE QUALITIES OF THE FATHER

The father is the guru, guru is also father. In 'Nithi Sāsthrā' five persons have been spoken of as father :

Janīthā chōpanīthā cha yaścha vidhyām prayachchathi
Annadhāthā Bayathrāthā panchaithē pitharah smruthāh

Janīthā - the father who has given birth to the boy.

Upanīthā - One who performs the 'upanayanam'

Sometimes it happens that many children do not have their father and someone else has to perform the 'upanayanam' (investiture of the sacred thread). Even when the father is there if 'upanayanam' is performed for two sons together, *Brahmōpadēsam* is given by the father to one son and by the paternal uncle for the other. Such a person is also a father. The *sāsthrās* say that only one who has been performing *Gāyathrī japā* as *anushtānā* should give *Brahmōpadēsam*. In olden times a father who did not practice *Gāyathrī anushtānam* got the *Brahmōpadēsam* done through someone who was qualified to do it. Such a person becomes the boy's father.

Yaścha Vidhyām prayachchathi - this is what we are concerned with. One who imparts learning, that is one who is a guru is a father. The one who protects the boy by feeding him (*annadhātā*) is father to such a boy.

Bayathrāthā - one who offers protection from fear is also the father. But what is popular is that next to the real father it is the guru who has the status of the father.

If the real father gives 'janma' the other father (guru) destroys the janma. Just as the father gives janma in the material world, the guru gives spiritual life.

Those who after 'upanayanam' take to spiritual pursuit (*pāramārthikam*) through the *Vēdhic* way are called 'Dwijanmar'.

In olden times, it was the guru who after performing upanayanam and thus becoming a father kept the *śishya* with him in the gurukulam. As soon as 'upanayanam' is done, it is second janma.

The bird is also called Dwijanma. When it is the egg it is one janma. When the egg opens and the bird comes out of it, it is second janma. It is the guru who does the 'incubation' of his *śishya* by his grace, makes the cover of the ego break and enables the *śishya* to fly in full form to the *Paramāthmā*.

The English word 'pupil' for student also indicates the principle of dwijanma. Pupa is the early stage of an insect. The insect in fact has four janmas - the egg, the worm, then it throws out thread from itself with which it makes a cage and remains in it actionless - that is called 'pupa' - when it comes out of the cage breaking it. Pupa also is like an egg. Pupil is derived from pupa.

Our *Vēdhic* tradition had been in vogue in the Western countries in ancient times. Later when they took to a different path and there was a mixture, pupa became pupil. But they have forgotten the import of the word because they did not have the continuing guru-*śishya* traditions as we have had. But now we have forgotten our own tradition and are following the Western civilization as if all life is that!

What the father-mother give is the first janma which relates to the body. What the guru gives during upanayanam is the second janma which is related to life in us. It is by continuously progressing in that janma and by destroying the life of the physical world one becomes the *āthmā* and *Paramāthmā*.

The guru who performs 'upanayanam' and teaches the *Vēdhās* is not the one who takes upto that last state. He only guides upto the state in which purity of mind is attained through *karmā* and concentration is attained through bhakthi. For the purity and concentration thus obtained to remain firm, the *jīvā* must go

through the struggles of life and must discharge its debt to the *dēvās*, rishis and pithrus. For this some time will be required depending upon the *samskārās* of each. Very rarely it happens that one attains *Brahma Jnāna* as a bachelor or even before that stage. Others will have to enter the *gruhashthāśramam* after the completion of *gurukulavāsam*, discharge all their debts of *karmā* and then only take to the *Vidhyā* that takes one to the *Brahmam*. At that stage another guru will come. He will give *sanyāsam* and give *upadēsam*. By the greatness of the *upadēsam* and by the power of the guru's grace, the *śishya* progresses in spiritual life and in the end frees himself from the cycle of birth and death. At that stage, the *śishya* becomes *Brahmam* itself.

* * *

FATHER-GURU IN OTHER RELIGIONS

The word father is derived from '*Pithā*', '*pithru*'. The religious preachers of Christianity are called 'Father'. We call them '*Padri*' which is derived from the Portuguese word '*Padre*'. *Padre* also means father. The Portuguese had come to India before the English and the French. They had indulged in conversion, built churches etc. Whether it is father or padre the root for both is the Sanskrit '*Pithru*'. We have in Chennai the St. Thomas Mount. The English St. Thomas became San Thome in Portuguese. The French are called Frank. In course of time it came to represent all Europeans. In the northern parts of our country it became Ferangi and in our region it became Parangi. St. Thomas Mount has come to be called '*Parangi Malai*' (Malai is the Mount). Near Chidambaram there is *Parangipēttai* on the seashore which is called Porto Novo. It means a new Port.

Just as we call the guru the *Pithā*, the words 'Father' and 'Padre' mean guru but it cannot be said that the close relationship

that exists between guru-*śishya* exists in any other religion except Jainism-Buddhism which are born in this country. The guru giving *Upadēśa* to the *śishya*, passing into him the manthra *śakthi* that has come traditionally, taking responsibility for him and taking him upto *mōksham*; in the same manner the *śishya* making total surrender to the guru and treating him as the ultimate refuge, taking him as god and rendering all service to him - these aspects of the guru-*śishya* relationship cannot be seen in other prominent religions. A Muslim gentleman said that in Islam, Murshid can be said to have the status of a guru and Murid, the position of a *śishya*. But that it is not as widely prevalent in that community as in ours.

Only in *Vēdhic* culture there is the greatness of a relationship between guru-*śishya* in the spiritual world, as there is between the father-son in the material world. I wanted to say that in other traditions also to some extent, the preacher is considered father. The Muslims call such persons 'Baba'. Because of Muslim influence, Hindus also in the North talk of Baba. That word too means father.

The Jews call their religious head 'Rabbi'. It is derived from the root 'Rabh'. It is said that 'rabh' means what is big, great, famous. It is Sanskrit 'Bruh' or 'Brah' which has become 'Rabh'. *Paramāthmā* is called *Brahmam* because it is bigger than everything else - bigger than the biggest. Is it not the one with embodies within itself everything? *Vēdhās* which tell us about that big thing also have the name Brahma. The word guru also means 'big or great man'. Therefore the jews calling as Rabbi the one who gives them *upadēśa* of Talmund (rules of their *Śāsthra*) also shows that thinking on the lines of the *Vēdhic* culture had prevailed all over the world.

At the conclusion of *Prasṇōpanishad* the *śishyas* who have received *upadēśam* from the rishi offer obeisance to him saying 'since you have taken us beyond the shores of a *Vidhyā* you are our

father'. The original word '*Thvam hi nah Pithā*' : '(only) you are our father'. The inner meaning is that 'the one who is called the father in practice is not the father; you are the true father'. Because that father gave only the janma that dies. There have been several fathers in several births. Therefore how can we call them true fathers? Only the other father (guru) has given the deathless janma. In his *bāshyam* at this point, *Āchāryā* says 'the guru takes the boat of *jñāna* through the ocean of ignorance which is full of crocodiles in the form of janma, old age, death and sorrow to *mōksham* which gives release from rebirth. Therefore to call him father is more appropriate'. In the material world, first place is accorded to the father who gives janma among those to be worshipped. If that is so, is there anything at all which cannot be said of the guru who gives the state of fullness, the state of fearlessness? State of fearlessness means the state of Adhwaitha. Fear means it is the state of Dwaitha. Everyone knows of 'bhava bhayam'. 'Bhavam' means *samsāra* which is dwaitham. Bhayam is added to it and bhava bhayam is talked of. Therefore abhayam is the state of Adhwaitha. When it is guru who blesses us with that state how can we describe his glory?

* * *

PATERNAL LINEAGE BEING THE LINEAGE OF GURU

We see that from ancient times, the father becoming the guru and there being a line of father-son having been guru-*śishya*. Our (*smārtha*) Brahma *Vidhyā* Guru *paramparā* is like that. The first guru is *Nārāyaṇā*. Brahma who is his son who becomes his *śishya* and receives *upadēsam* from him. Brahma's son *Vasīṣṭā* had Brahma as his guru. Then it is his son *Śakthi*, then his son *Parāśar*, then *Vyāsā* and his grandson *Śukar*. Upto that the guru-*śishya paramparā* consists of father-son. There is change after *Śukar* who was a *naiṣṭhika brahmachārī*. He gave *upadēsam* to

Gaudapādhā who was a *sanyāsi*, then to *Gōvindhā Bhagavadpādhā* who gave *Upadēśa* to our *Āchāryā*. Then it was the lineage of *sanyāsi-sishya*, the heads of the mutts which came under them. It became that both guru and *sishya* were *sanyāsis*.

Generally, the lineage of rishis was not just father-son but were guru-*sishya* too.

* * *

NAMES OF RISHIS IN MATERNAL LINEAGE GLORY OF MOTHER AS EXPOUNDED BY ĀCHĀRYĀ

In the ten Upanishads which are called *Daśōpanishad* and which are the foundation for our Vaidhika religion, in *Bruhadāranyakam* at the concluding part which is '*vamśa brāhmaṇam*' the names of all the rishis who have from the beginning given *Upadēśa* of that Upanishad and protected it are given and the list is given of their lineage (*vamśa*). There is no *upadēśam* but only the lineage is given. The name of each rishi is mentioned and it is said whose son he is.

Although one is the son of both the father and the mother, all over the world, it is the practice to say that one is the son of such and such father because the father is considered the head of the family. Even today in any document it is the father's name which is to be filled up. Even the initials are related to the father.

Since the fathers of the rishis who are mentioned in the *Vēdhās*-Upanishads are also guru, the son is referred to with reference to the father only. Even when we do '*abhivādhānam*' (repeating the lineage after prostrating and introducing oneself) we repeat only the lineage of the male rishis who started our *gōthras*.

Contrary to this widely prevalent practice at the end of the *Bruhadāranya* Upanishad from the beginning and for quite a long

lineage the name of the rishi is mentioned and it is said that he is the son of such and such a mother.

To the question how it has been given like this the answer is found in *Āchāryā's bāshyam*. What he says is 'it is generally said with great praise that for a son to be of good qualities (*guṇavān*) it is the woman, the mother who is chiefly responsible. It is because the son acquires greatness because of the mother, the lineage of *āchāryās* has been given like this'.

* * *

WOMEN AND BRAHMA VIDHYĀ

Because *Āchāryā* has said like this it should not be wrongly understood that either he or the ancient rishis considered that women also could be had as gurus for Brahma *Vidhyā*. Neither in the original nor in the *bāshyam* there is anything said about *upadēsam* of '*Āthma Sāsthrā*'. It is merely mentioned that the rishis referred to are the sons of such and such mothers and it is not said that they received from them *upadēsam* of any *Vidhyā*. In the *bāshyam* also what is said is only about the son being *guṇavān* and not about being *jñānavān* or *Vidhyāvān*.

It is true that without doubt during the period of the Upanishad women who had deep knowledge of matters pertaining to '*adhyāthma sāsthrā*' had entered into debates with men who were giants in that field. But it is nowhere mentioned that anyone had received *Vidhyā* from them in the form of *upadēsam*. Similarly except for *Yājñavalkya* who had kept with him his wife and told her soul related matters it is nowhere said that women received *upadēsam* from gurus. It appears that because of the atmosphere and surroundings - particularly the radiation of the very presence of the *śrēṣṭhās* and *jñānis* - and more than that because of their own inborn desire for matters spiritual some women became

'*brahmavādhini*'. But there is no firm evidence to show that they - as gurus or *śishyas* - received or gave *upadēśam*.

The maximum that is seen in this regard is that in the beginning when *Vēdhās* - Upanishads came to be preached and in the *yugās* that followed but before Kali the elders in the family taught some *manthrās*, some *upāsanās* and some *Vidhyā* to the girl children in the family and the latter had practiced them. It appears that the girl children must have been instructed only in arts and education that give worldly knowledge and methods of worship which were not like Upanishad or philosophy etc. It also appears that it was only rarely in some cases, the women were taught *Vēdha manthrās*. It can also be guessed that when a girl child showed great keenness and intellectual brilliance to know things philosophical, they were taught philosophy also. From the *Vēdhās* and upto the later day literature there is a lot said about youngsters who had gone through *gurukulavāsam* under a rishi or under an *āchāryā*. From these details it is seen that only in one out of the hundred cases a girl had learnt not only from the elders at home but also from an *āchāryā* who was running a gurukulam. But even in such a gurukulam if there were hundred boy students there were hardly one or two girl students, it is possible to guess.

Earlier to the part in (*Bṛuhadārāṇyaka* Upanishad) in which the lineage is given with reference to the mother, where it is said that for a child to be born with such and such qualities (*guṇa*) the father has to do such and such *anushtānam*, it is said that such and such rules have to be followed for the birth of a girl child who can become a *pandithā*. From this it is seen that not only were there women who were born intelligent, learned *sāsthrās* and became *pandithās* there were also fathers who had desired that such girl children should be born to them. But even here *Āchāryā* has kept in mind the dharma suitable for us of the Kali age and written his *bāshyam*. He is of the view that *pandithā* does not mean acquiring

mastery over Brahma *Vidhyā Śāsthrām* and the reason he gives is 'since women are not entitled to learn the *Vēdhās*'. But if it is asked why then they are said to be *pandithā*, he says 'they are *pandithā* because they master the science of running home'. It is 'gruha thanthra' which means running the family on right lines, domestic management. The mastery of the women is in managing it capably and efficiently - this is *Āchāryā*'s view.

* * *

SCHOLARSHIP OF WOMEN : DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLDEN TIMES AND THESE DAYS

In the days when *Āchāryā* gave new life to the *Vēdhic* way, male members did not take up jobs for earning. From the time they got up early in the morning they spent the entire day in *anushtānās*. Means for their simple living came through grants, guru *dakshiṇā* etc. Since the male members were fully engaged in *anushtānās* the women also were with them rendering service to help them with their *anushtānās*. In such a situation, women had no need to acquire scholarship and there was nothing for them to gain from scholarship.

But these days there is the compulsion that men have to spend the entire day in office or other work place for a earning. The situation has advanced to such an extent that it appears it cannot be changed.

Thus for the men it is office and the remaining time it is idle chatting and entertainment. They do not read books dealing with religion, spiritual evolution or development of the mind and intellect and not even good literature.

When we look at the situation, it appears that we can find a remedy to this only if we do something different from what *Āchāryā* has said. In a general sense, when I say this it is sin. It is

irreverence too. It is not that I am not aware of it. I realize very well that it is not at all correct to change dharmas in the name of changed times compared to *Āchāryā's* time.

Even so I deeply think from the bottom of my heart what *Āchāryā* would have said had he been here these days when it has become compulsory for men to go to office and then consider the resulting position of women and venture to tell what I feel. When the women remain the whole day at home they have no need to assist in yajnas etc. Although they have to manage the house for which they have to do many things they will still find spare time even after resting. If they are not to spend the spare time in idle chatting etc the way for it is something different from what *Āchāryā* has said. Today the ladies alone can spend all their spare time in studying the *Ithihāsas*, *Purāṇās*, *Sthōthrās* and also quality literature. This will not only ensure spending their spare time usefully. If the books which have infused life into our great culture through the ages are not to die and if we are not to take the blame for their perishing the only way is that at least the women to read them.

They can give the gist of whatever they have read to their husbands and create in them a taste for our culture. Even if the husband does not want to read it on his own accord, if the wife reads it he will learn it from her.

If our sacred and ancient literary wealth is not to disappear after our time it is possible only if ladies become scholars. Since this is the practical situation I have made bold to say this.

Āchāryā's view was that scholarship meant only scholarship in the *Vēdhās* and since women are not entitled to learn the *Vēdhās* he had said that they could not become scholars. I too do not say that they should read the *Vēdhās*. I only say that they may read those *Ithihāsas*, *Purāṇās*, *Sthōthrās* etc which are not *Vēdhās*.

In the hope that *Āchāryā* will bestow his blessing to this without considering this as sin or '*abhachāram*' I make this recommendation.

The Sthri Dharma according to *Śruthi* - Smruthi is that women should be at home taking care of it and to help them in this *Āchāryā* has said they need not go after acquiring scholarship in learning. What I say now is also not contrary to that dharma. I am not asking the women to take up jobs outside home. I only say that the wealth of our culture which men have lost by going for jobs should be saved by the women and through them it should reach men also.

* * *

THE HIGH STATUS ACCORDED TO WOMEN BY ĀCHĀRYĀ

It should not at all be thought that *Āchāryā* had downgraded the status of women. Although according to tradition, they were not entitled to learn or teach *Vēdhās* - *Vēdānthā*, *Āchāryā* had very well understood the power that mothers have in guiding the children in the right path in the informal way and had endorsed it. *Āchāryā* has also said that the women could even attain *Brahma Jnāna* in the informal way.

Gaudapādhāchārya who was *Āchāryā*'s guru's guru has written notes on *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad*. The learned say that it is pure Adhwaitha classic. In that there is a *śloka* which says 'only those few who have the unassailable conviction that only the *Brahmam* which has no birth and is equal without any difference of this or that is the truth have acquired the great *jnāna*'. Hence for 'those few' - *yē kēchith* which comes here - *Āchāryā*'s *bāshyam* is 'those including women'. That is why it appears he was of the view that even women can attain *Brahma Jnānam*. He has said that although generality of women in the world are not fit for it some among them who are extraordinary can attain *Brahma Jnānam*.

Āchāryā who says that women can reach upto the stage of acquiring Brahma *Jnāna* gives them a high status in worldly life also. The status is not merely because the mother is also a guru. In his *Praśnōthra* Rathna *Mālikā* he says that she is the fittest companion for her husband. There is a question in it. 'Who is the fittest companion to a *gruhastha*?' and he gives the answer '*Bhāryā*'.

* * *

MOTHER TOO AS GURU : ĀCHĀRYĀ'S APPROVAL

Is not guiding on the right path the function of the guru? Therefore the mother also has the status of a guru like the father. This too has been mentioned by *Āchāryā*. A little earlier we have seen that *Āchāryā* has said that the mother occupies the important place in the son being of good qualities (*guṇavān*). A child being in the womb of a mother who is a *guṇavathi*, taking from her food etc grows up and acquires the wealth of good qualities. This is how she guides the son on the right path without herself knowing about it. Then when the child is young she tells stories, *purāṇās*, *sthōthrās* etc and guides him on the right path. The young son also observes the mother's good conduct and by its subtle powers he learns many things in his young age. There is the saying, 'as is the mother, so is the son'.

Āchāryā has noted all these and with great sympathy and giving respect he has in *Katōpanishad* and also quoting *Bṛuhadāraṇyakam* has shown that the mother, father and the guru have the right and the greatness of being '*Pramāṇa Kāraṇam*'. The meaning of *Pramāṇa Kāraṇam* here is 'authentic status of guru'.

Just as in *Bṛuhadāraṇyakam* several rishis have been mentioned with the names of their mothers, in *Chāndōgyam* also two such names have been mentioned. One of them is Krishna

Paramāthmā. Scholars say 'This is the earliest reference about Krishna; it is a reference which proves that he was a historical personality'. It comes in *Chāndōgyam* when speaking about 'Purusha Yajnam'. It is a yajna which makes one live upto 116 years. It is to be noted that Krishna lived beyond 120 years. He had received his *upadēsam* from the rishi *Gōra Āngīras*. It is said that after receiving the *upadēsam* 'he was without thirst'. It means that after learning this *upadēsam* he lost the desire to learn any other *Vidhyā*. Desire is a thirst that is never quenched. The word '*thrishnā*' denotes both thirst and desire. Buddha refers to desire as *thrishnā* only. In Buddhist books it will be written as '*thanhā*' (in Pali language which is distorted Sanskrit).

We should not think 'would Krishna who was a '*pūrṇā avathāra*' have learned such a worldly thing and become satisfied?' In this *vidhyā* it is said that a *jīvā* offers its '*Pancha Prāṇā*' in a line to *Vāsu*, *Rudra*, *Āditya* and crosses the first, second and third part of the life of 116 years. One does not know what all secret spiritual truths are hidden. What all metaphysical secrets may be hidden in the very life of 116 years!

We were on the subject of the son being spoken of with reference to the mother. When referring to Krishna here it is said '*Krishnāya Dēvakīputhrāya*'. Because he is *Vāsudēvā*'s son he has the well-known name '*Vāsudēvā*'. In a life of 116 years in the first part it is the *Vasus* who are the life support. But true to his 'deceptive' nature he has introduced himself to the rishi as *Dēvakī Puthra*'. In *Bhāgavatham* it is said that the seed (*bijam*) that caused Krishna *avathāram* was taken by *Vāsudēvā* in his mind and passed on to *Dēvakī*'s mind and they are not shown as father and mother on account of physical union. Yet, *Dēvakī* did in fact become pregnant and gave birth to Krishna. Therefore, *Bhagawān* must have thought that there is some justification for giving her the status of mother, that there is not that much justification to give

the status of father to *Vāsudēvā* and therefore might have said like that.

* * *

SATHYAKĀMA JĀPĀLAR

The other rishi who is mentioned (in *Chāndōgyam*) with reference to the mother is *Sathyakāma Jāpālar*. During his younger years he was living with his mother only. It is not known whether the father had died or abandoned the home. *Jāpālar* who saw that boys of his age were in *gurukulavāsam* and were observing brahmacharyam desired to join the gurukulam and told his mother. When joining the gurukulam the rishi would ask for his *gōthram*. Therefore he asked his mother what his *gōthram* was. The mother said 'Dear Child! I was working and rendering service in many places and passing my life. You were born sometime when I was young. I do not know your *gōthram* or anything. Do one thing. My name is *Jāpālā*. Since you are my son you are *Jāpālan* on the basis of my name. You had been named *Sathyakāmā*. Therefore when the rishi at the gurukulam asks you you tell him the truth and introduce yourself as *Sathyakāma Jāpālar*.

Sathyakāmā means one who is attached to and has love for sathyam. That lady had told the truth as *Sathyakāmai*. She did not tell a lie to the son that his *gōthram* was such and such. The boy was also like his mother. He went to the rishi 'Haridhruma Gauthamar' and true to his name he repeated before the rishi what his mother had told him; '*Sathyakamō jāpālō (a)smi bhōh*' (Sir, I am the one having the name *Sathyakāma Jāpālar*) and prostrated before the rishi.

Immediately, the rishi thought 'One who is not of noble birth cannot speak like this. Therefore I am performing 'upanayanam' for you' so goes the story.

I have narrated this to show that rarely here and there lineage through the mother is also mentioned. The story also shows how the *śishya* should be truthful, have thirst for *Vidhyā* etc. It is also seen that when such a person takes refuge seeking *upadēsam*, it is the characteristic of the guru to give him *upadēsam* unhesitatingly. When one cannot say who the father is and what the *gōthra* is there is room to think wrongly of the person. Yet, the rishi did not think like that but accepted the boy. This reminds me of *Thirukkural* which says 'For great persons the light of truthfulness is true light'.

* * *

GURU WHO IS ABOVE THE MOTHER AND FATHER

Of the four - the mother, father, guru and god - we regard the mother and father also as guru and god. But the mother is not considered the father and vice-versa. The guru and god are considered to be the other three.

The attachment of mother and father is strong. By showing that attachment and love, pampering them, the parents guide the children on right lines in an informal way. Even if the child does not grow to be on right lines, they do not reject the child but bring it up - partly due to attachment and partly by the thought that it is their duty. It is only the guru who has the task of guiding on right lines as the complete job. Even if he has limitless love for the *śishya* that is channeled only towards taking him on the right path. Because of personal attachment he does not deviate from his goal. Therefore out of the three - mother, father guru - it is only the guru who does good, only the good. That is why *Āchāryā* has said in *Bāla Bhōdha* Sangraham which is like the primary reader for Adhvaitham that 'father and mother are not the refuge but only the guru'.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRAIN AND THE HEART

But since the teacher who teaches subjects like arts and science etc has also come to be called guru, the question arises 'he is just teaching something which has nothing to do with following the right path. How can he be given the high status of guru?'

It is not only in these times but even in ancient times atheism was also treated as a *Śāsthā* and even gambling and thieving were treated as *Vidhyā* and gurus have been mentioned for them. Bruhaspathi himself has been said to be the originator (*Mūla Purushā*) for *Chārvākam* which is atheism. The *Śāsthā* relating to thieving - it is called Chauryam - the originator is said to be *Mūla Dēvar*. Since he was the son of *Karṇī* he was called *Karṇīsudhar*.

Śāsthā and *Vidhyā* are one and the same. We are talking of *Rāja Śāsanam*. All that was done by great men as command supported by rules are *Śāsthā*. They are *Vidhyā* because they provide knowledge in particular fields. 'Vidh' is to know. As mentioned above if atheism, thieving and cheating are included in *Vidhyā*, it means that *Vidhyā* is gaining knowledge in a particular field. It may be any branch. If it is systematized and taught it amounts to teaching *Vidhyā* and one who does it becomes guru.

But this ties down a *jīvā* within the limits of the brain and also degrades the status of a guru. When thought is given only to the development of brain and providing knowledge in any field is considered *Vidhyā*, it amounts to neglecting the heart. For a *jīvā* to live as a true *jīvā* and also to evolve into a *Dēvā* the development of the heart is more important than that of the brain. That is why loading only the brain with knowledge and developing it is said to 'split the *jīvā*'. The duty of a true guru is not only to make the *śishya* knowledgeable but to make him a person of good qualities. If instead the *śishya* is just made knowledgeable it lowers the status of the guru.

Noting that in the creation of the Lord, the human brain is a wonderful tool - noting only that - anything that has been systematized as art or science has been considered *Vidhyā* and the one who teaches them as guru. But it should not be thought that this was the view of our ancestors.

For the proper conduct of worldly life, knowledge - what is not related to spirituality - is necessary. There are several things which are not directly beneficial to life but give satisfaction and joy - music, sculpture, history, language studies etc. Day after day science subjects are growing which are not good or bad by themselves but depend upon how we make use of them. I am including all those which gives joy and enliven life and not merely giving satisfaction in a material way. For such a life all these *Vidhyās* are necessary. It has been so since the advent of civilized society. In our country, those who were teaching such *Vidhyā* which provide knowledge were also noble hearted, honest and of good conduct. Except those who taught thieving, gambling etc all other teachers taught morals, that is good conduct and devotion to God which is basic to it. Therefore those who had learnt from them gave the teachers the status of a guru through whom they felt they should have bhakthi and in whom they should have faith. They not only gained knowledge which developed brain but they also benefited by the words taught to them and by the personal example of their teachers and their personal radiation and attained development of heart also. But all these do not ensure the evolution of the soul. It is only the guru who was exclusively there to ensure this who was called *āchāryā*, *dēsikar* etc in our tradition.

Our ancestors gave importance to making the *jīvā* a *dēvā*. Even the intellectuals of other religions say, 'in no other country or religion or culture all that appears secular has been spiritualised'.

* * *

THE PRESENT FALLEN STATE

These days, particularly after the advent of freedom, education has come to mean total neglect of the heart and loading the brain. The education system followed by the British in the pre-independence days had as its objective, the destruction of our way of life and making us slaves but they implemented it in a cunning way to make it appear that it was being followed for our progress. We all wished that at the end of their rule, the education system should be changed. It was of course changed. But what replaced the old system is even worse. There is neither education nor any system in it. Whether at least the brain is being loaded is also a question mark. Merit has been pushed aside and education, degrees etc are linked to caste, money power, threats etc. How then will there be quality? Getting admissions by open bribery or bribery in the form of a donation, manipulating pass marks, securing pass through threats etc, - teachers and management are giving room for all these. There is such vast difference between guru-*sisya* relationship and their qualifications of the olden times and that of the teachers-students of these days who are multiplying in numbers. The most worrying fact is that the government does not seem to be aware that there is no arrangement to produce good citizen when the ancient culture is getting eroded. It is true that the government both in Delhi and in the States have to face a lot of problems on all sides. Even then is not education the seed and the capital for the future? Is it not necessary to accord priority to it and reform it? It is sad to know that instead of doing that even whatever is there is deteriorating. Therefore I want to appeal to the present day teachers.

* * *

SECULAR EDUCATION

In olden times too, there were teachers who had taught only secular subjects which were unrelated to soul or religion or

dharma. But among them rarely one or two were those who had taught atheism. Similar was the case of those who had taught gambling and thieving. But even those who taught secular subjects like physics, chemistry, *āyurvēdhā*, sculpture, painting etc did not fail to teach dharma as a secondary. That is there was no secular education without moral instruction. They did not leave matters with just teaching. Unless the students lived properly in real life they were even rejected. But in the present scheme of education what was moral instruction at least for namesake has become diluted. The Government of free India has done this for fear that 'moral' may touch the god, religion etc and this would affect their 'progressive' policy of secularism. There are even reports from one or two places that teachers themselves instigate the students in ways which are opposed to good conduct etc.

Apart from this, here (in Tamil Nadu), everything is being done to bury Sanskrit which was taught even during British times and which is the backbone of national integration about which so much is being talked. It is open secret that antagonism to religion and a particular community is the reason for this. But Sanskrit is not a language exclusive to religious subjects. There are several books in that language dealing with various subjects. They are a treat to the intellect and are applauded by the world. Not only ethics and dharma but there are books dealing with arts and all sciences. There are books on statecraft, politics, *āyurvēdhā* - in fact on all subjects without exception.

Just as it is not the language of a religion it is also not the language of a community. It was because it was the link language for intellectuals from Kashmir to Kanyakumari it brought about unity at the intellectual level and true integration. There was Vivekananda. He is not considered antedeluvian like us but is praised as one having revolutionary and progressive ideas. He had high regard for Buddha and Buddhism. Such a person has said that

harm was caused to the great culture of this land when Buddhists discarded Sanskrit and started propagating through Pali language. I am greatly worried whether there is any hope for our people who have been denied the advantage of a great family wealth.

In olden times, there was no education or learning which was devoid of the teaching of dharma. Those who taught also observed the ways of dharma.

* * *

GURU: ĀCHĀRYĀ

But if a teacher had taught mainly secular subjects and dealt with dharma only as a secondary subject in *dharma Śāstrā*, he was accorded only a secondary place among teachers.

When guru and *āchāryā* are defined in several ways guru is to be accorded a status higher than *āchāryā*. But with a different meaning *āchāryā* also has been accorded higher status. It is so in Manusmruthi. *Āchāryā* is one who teaches *Vēdhās - Vēdānthā* without expectation of any remuneration. After saying that one who teaches *Vēdha Vidhyā* for salary is a *upādhyāyā* it is also said that if he teaches for earning money one who teaches the *śishya* secular subjects to enable him to earn is a guru. It cannot be said that this definition has been accepted by the *śishtas*. For a long time the practice has been in vogue that all kinds of teachers are called guru and guru being given a high status. But when a distinction has to be made technically and words are to be used accordingly *āchāryā* is said to be one who preaches dharma, bhakthi and *jñāna* and shows the path to the other world. There has been the practice among some scholars of referring to the one who shows the way for worldly life including some moral instruction as guru. Different kinds of teachers are given the general name guru and among them the *āchāryā* who shows the

path to the other world is the greatest : 'Āchāryah śrēshto guruṇām'

Everyone knows that conduct according to *sāsthrās* which is *āchāram* and *āchāryā* are related words as seen by the similarity of sounds. The perfect *āchāryā* is one who by his own example demonstrates the conduct in accordance with *sāsthrās* and more than that the experience which is the goal of spiritual *Śāsthrā*.

* * *

ADHYAKSHAKA : ADHYĀPAK

Adhyakshaka is also one of the several names for the teacher. It can be said as adhyaksha or adhyakshaka. *Adhyāpaka* is also a name for the teacher. Although both adhyakshaka and *adhyāpaka* start with 'adhyā' there is considerable difference in meaning. Adhyakshaka is based on 'aksh' (the eye). What is before the eyes is 'Prathyaksha'. One under whose eyes (supervision) a thing is done is adhyakshaka. Since he supervises the *śishya* and conducts him on the right path the teacher is adhyakshaka.

Adhyāpaka is one who does adhyayana. Adhyayan can be said to be education in a general way. Particularly it is learning of *Vēdhās*. Even if it is general education if it is related to *Vēdhās*, it is adhyayana. 'Ayanam' is to go on a prescribed path. Adhyayan is the education that takes one through the path that redeems the soul. Since *Vēdhās* are memorized and recited in the right way it is called *Vēdha Adhyayanam*.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GURU WILL BE IMBIBED BY THE ŚISHYA ALSO

The alphabet (Sanskrit) 'Wo' which combines with both 'Ga' and 'Ra' and makes the word Guru is *Vishṇu*. Since it is itself 'avyaktham' what is the characteristic of the guru that is

indicated? Since the word *Vishṇu* denotes omnipresence it means Guru is omnipresent (*sarva vyāpi*). Since it is *sarvam* and *vyāpi* it relates to the world of duality. '*Vishṇu sabhdam*' being indicated for the guru shows that the power of the guru pervades the whole world, being all embracing.

If guru is something he will make a *śishya* also the same thing. He who gives *siddhi* and removes sin in respect of the *śishya* also gives him the power of grace which is all-embracing and the *Upadēśa śakthi* and makes him a guru like him. This is how it is to be understood. Then he gives the *śishya* the state of '*avyaktha Brahman*' which he himself is.

* * *

GREATNESS OF THE WORD 'ĀCHĀRYĀ'

Although in the *śloka* we have seen above the guru has been given the highest status we call the originator of our *sampradhāya* (*mūla purushā*) *Sri Śankara* as '*Āchāryā*'. Therefore I am reverting to that word again and will explain the greatness of that word.

The term *āchāryā* has been defined thus : 'One who has thoroughly analysed the *śāstrās*, who conducts himself according to the *āchārās* laid down in the *śāstrās*, teaches the same to others and makes them remain stable in the '*Śāsthra āchārā*.'

Āchinōthi hi śāstrārthāth āchārē sthāpayathyapi
Swayam ācharathē Yaścha tham āchāryam prachakshathē

This is the definition known to all those who know Sanskrit and the *śāstrās*.

The words '*Swayam ācharathē*' in the above *śloka* provide the life force and exalted status to the word '*āchāryā*'. That is he must practice what he preaches; his own life should be the example. It is only then what he tells the *śishya* will have the life

force and make him follow that path. Otherwise it will be just pleasing to hear and will end in a second. The guru who conducts himself the way he teaches the *śishya* is 'āchāryā'.

The followers of Buddha had given several names to Buddha one of which is *Thathāgathar*. Several meanings are given to this word. The direct meaning is :

Thathā - the same way

Gathar - one who went

It means that he was the one who had followed the same path which he had preached to the world.

Our *Āchāryā* was also like that. He also followed what he had taught : *Swayam ācharathē*. But there is a big difference. Buddha did not show the way according to the old *sāsthrās* and did not follow it. It is *Āchāryā* who had followed the *sāsthrās*. Since these days *Śāsthrā* is not liked, Buddha has become a greater favourite!

When describing the characteristics of an *āchāryā* in the *dharma sāsthrās* it is said 'one who performs the upanayana, makes the person do *Vēdha* adhyayana and then gives *Upadēśa* of all *Vidhyās* including Kalpa *Śāsthrā* and Upanishads which are *Vedānthā sāsthrām* called 'secrets' is *āchāryā*'.

* * *

UPĀDHYĀYĀ

These days the guru and *āchāryā* whom we know is only the teacher in the school or college. Although tradition has it that the guru has to be given *dakṣhiṇā*, the true guru does not teach in expectation of it. One who teaches with the object that learning must spread is called guru, *āchāryā*, *adhyāpak*, *adhyaksha*. There is a definition that the one who teaches for a remuneration is *upādhyāyā*. Here we find that of the several kinds of teachers, the

upādhyāyā enjoys inferior status. But there is another definition which gives him also a high status. That is '*Upēdhya thasmāth adhīyatha ithi upādhyāyah*'. This definition contains a whole drama. It is the definition that gives the meaning through actors in the drama instead of giving the factual meaning. The definition is in the form of a talk by a father to his son before leaving him in gurukulam showing him the guru.

'*Upēdhya*' means 'going near and remaining there'. By this word the father tells the son 'Go to him and remain with him in *gurukulavāsam*'.

'Thasmāth' - from him

'Adhīyatha' - learn

The father who says 'live with him and learn', the son and the *āchāryā* to whom he has to go - thus this definition is in the form of a small drama with three characters.

It has to be understood that one with whom the boy has to live and do '*Vidhyābhayāsam*', leaving his home, is *upādhyāyā*.

* * *

DĒSIKAR WHO SHOWS THE WAY

There is also a definition for a teacher which is more direct : *Dhisathi vidhyām ithi dēśikah*. Is it not the characteristic of a teacher who gives learning? That is what is said briefly and in a direct manner in this definition.

Vidhyām : learning

Dhisathi : Gives

Ithi : because

Dēśikah is called *Dēśikar*.

Although in the *Vēdhās* and Upanishads the word *Dēśika* is not used there are several places in which what is defined as the function of a *dēśikar* is mentioned as the function of a guru.

One of the definitions of a *dēśika* is : 'One who shows the direction is *Dēśika*'. The function is to show the direction to be followed to reach the spiritual goal. It is generally said that the guru shows the way and the *śishya* follows it.

* * *

IN UPANISHAD - GURU WHO SHOWS THE WAY

A Upanishad (*Chāndōgyam*) explains through a story the role of one who guides another who lost his way. We talk of someone being left in a forest blind-folded. The story describes such an incident. There was a wealthy person in *Gāndhāra* (Dhritharashtra's wife *Gāndhārī* hailed from there. It is said that 'Ga' has been distorted into 'Ka' and '*Gāndhāra*' has become '*Kāndahār*'. If that is so it would refer to Afghanistan which was on the borders of the pre-partition India. Some people say that the region around Peshawar which is in Pakistan is old *Gāndhār*.) A robber kidnaps him, takes him to a forest, leaves him there blindfolded and commits robbery. But he does not kill him. Then he runs away. The rich man kept shouting to see if anyone would come for help. A passer-by comes that way. He untied the bandage over his eyes and gives him clear direction about how to proceed to reach *Gāndhār*. The rich man follows the direction and reaches *Gāndhār*. The Upanishad ends the story by telling 'It is like this that one who has secured an *āchāryā* attains *jnāna*'. The Upanishad word indicates the inner meaning that 'it is only the one who gets an *āchāryā* who can gain *jnāna*'.

The story only says 'like this'. The Upanishad does not explain. It is like the person who had been kidnapped and who

came to know through a passer-by the way to reach home a *jīvā* who is in the state of *Brahmam* is kidnapped by *Māyā* and left in the forest of *samsāra*. Just as the robber robbed the rich man of his money, *Māyā* robs the *jīvā* of his *jnāna*. His eyes become blind due to *ajnāna*. But there is a big difference. The *Māyā* does not run away like the robber!

‘How to get out of the forest of *samsāra* and reach *mōksha*? Who will tell me the way?’ Thus the *jīvā* tries to find out. Although he has developed a thirst for *jnāna*, the thirst to attain *mōksha*, *Īswara* does not allow him to quench that thirst by himself. He sends a guru through whom his own grace is channelised and quenches the thirst. That guru is like the passer-by in the Upanishad story. *Guru-āchāryā* comes, he opens up the covering bandage of *ajnāna* and tells him the way, that is the ‘*jnāna mārga*’, to reach *mōksha*.

* * *

EVEN GREAT MEN HAVE HAD SEVERAL GURUS

In our Adhwaitha *sampradhāya* the person to whom we are duty bound to offer obeisance is *Vidhyārāṇya Swāmigaḷ*. It is clearly seen from the Guru Vandana which is at the beginning of his several books that he had three *Vēdānthā* gurus - *Śankarānandhā*, *Bhārathi Thīrthā*, *Vidhyā Thīrthā*. In the beginning of *Panchadaśī* which all those who learn Adhwaitha *Śāsthṛā* according to the rules laid down read, he has offered obeisance to *Śankarānandhā*. During the time before he took *sanyāsa* *Vidhyārāṇya* was the guru and minister of Harihara and Bhukkan who ruled in Karnataka. At that time he had the name *Mādhavāchārya*. Because of the high position he had occupied in the Government, this name continued to be in vogue even after he became *Vidhyārāṇya Swāmigaḷ*. It was not only his status. The service he has rendered to our religion while being in that post is enormous. If *Āchāryā* had established

the Adhwaitha *Vēdānthā* by defeating 72 religions, *Vidhyārāṇya* had successfully repulsed Muslim invasion, checkmated the spread of Dwaitham and *Vīra Śaivism* in Karnataka. He was responsible for the establishment of Hindu '*sāmrājya*'. Therefore his name *Mādhavāchārya* continued to prevail. There are also some books of *Vidhyārāṇya* which bear that name from which it is seen that *Bhārathi Thīrthā* who was a great *sanyāsi* was also his guru. A particular book which comes to mind is his '*Jaimanīya Nyāyamālā Vistharam*'. At the beginning of the book he says '*Bhārathi Thīrtha Yathindra Krupām Avyāhathām labdhvā*' - that he had received the grace of the *Swāmi* continuously.

In the book *Jīvan Mukthi Vivēkam* both at the beginning and at the end he has referred to *Vidhyā Thīrthar*, a great *sanyāsi*, as *Vidhyā Thīrtha Mahēswarar* and offered his obeisance.

He had written a book '*Anubhūthi Prakāśikā*' in which he has explained the import of twelve important Upanishads. In that at the conclusion of each chapter he refers to '*Vidhyā Thīrtha Mahēswarar*' and prayed for a particular grace. In one of that he says that *Vidhyā Thīrthā* is his important guru. Does it not show that he had many gurus and the *Vidhyā* guru was the important one?

They are all *sanyāsa* gurus. In addition he has also mentioned one Sarvajna *Vishṇu* as his guru - this is said in *Sarva Dharśana Sangraham* - a digest of all religious *siddhānthās*.

Dattātrēya was a great person and a guru in *Vēdānthā*, Sri *Vidhyā* tradition and guru of *yōga siddhās*. He was of the form of *Thrimūrthi*. In *Bhāgavatham* it is said that he had twenty four gurus. He has given the status of guru to wind, ocean etc which are insentient, animals such as spider, wasp, bee etc, hunter, prostitute and others. He says from each of them he had learnt some aspect and because of that he calls each of them his guru.

Therefore it is seen that having several gurus was part of *Sadāchārām*.

* * *

PATHIVRATHAM AND GURUVRATHAM

If there is a guru, should not one make complete surrender to him and remain at that? Is it possible to divide himself and give himself to several gurus? Is it possible to apportion *saranāgathi* to different gurus? It used to be asked 'if a woman has several husbands, how can she maintain *Pāthivrathyam*. Is it not similar if one has several gurus?

If one adopts one guru and surrenders to him, it is well and good. But if he does not do so (that is if he has more than one guru) he will not attract the same blemish that a *pathivrathā* will attract. A woman has her parents, children and several relatives. A noble woman loves all of them and does for them all that needs to be done. Still her relationship with her husband is something special and unique. To him she has surrendered.

Just as there are several relatives there may be several gurus. But among them there is one who occupies the first position like the husband of a woman. Surrender is done to him only and not in a divisive manner to several gurus.

Just as the woman loves all the relatives there is respect, love and bhakthi to all the gurus. Therefore just as the woman subordinates herself to the in-laws the *sisya* subordinates himself to all the gurus.

In the temple there are different deities in different 'sannidhis'. Even at home in the *Panchāyathna pūjā*, there are five deities. Although bhakthi is shown to all the deities, there is always a favourite deity and the surrender is to that deity only. In the

same manner, even when showing bhakthi to several gurus, surrender is done to one of them who is important.

The reason why there are several gurus is that there are several branches in the *Vidhyā* that teaches the way to the other world. A look into *Chāndōgyam* will show that within *Āthma Sāsthrā* and the branch that deals with worship (*upāsanā*) there are several branches. Since there are several branches of *Vidhyā*, each guru would have specialized in one branch. It is somewhat like our going to a specialist on the advice of our family doctor.

This can be stated differently. The guru and the upa-gurus are like the vocalist and the accompanying artistes in a concert. Upa-gurus help in absorbing the subject taught by the main guru just as the accompanying artistes help to increase the appeal of the vocal music.

One who is the main guru for someone may be a upa-guru for someone else. This is like a teacher teaching only geography to one class but being the class teacher in another class. It is not that one's main guru is great and the upa-guru is not so great.

Sometimes it happens that even after making surrender to a guru and achieving progress one has to take refuge in another guru who is also equally important. Such a person will consider both of them as important gurus and worship them. What is to be noted is that such a *śishya* has to tell each guru about the other guru frankly and it is only with their consent and their blessings the *śishya* should have two gurus. If he does not act in such a manner, it would amount to cheating the guru. It also happens that the guru unto whom a *śishya* has taken refuge himself sends him to another guru. These should be rare cases happening as a result of previous *samskāra*.

But how can surrender (*saranāgathi*) be divided between two gurus? This is a question that others ask. But this question has not

arisen between the *śishya* and the two gurus. The two gurus will be as one. The *śishya* understands it but the why and how of this cannot be explained to others.

Are not *Īśwara* and *Ambāl* together as one *Mūrthi* - *Ardhanārīśwara*? Is there not the *Thrimūrthi* which is a single *Mūrthi*?

Such a *śishya* will have no confusion in his mind about having two gurus. It is like the one good husband appearing in different dresses. He will know that the goal is one and the person who takes him to the goal is in different forms. There is greater authority for us from Upanishads. We find that many characters who are mentioned in that had gone to several gurus. The story of the man from *Gāndhār* mentioned above was told to *Swēthakēthu* who himself had received *upadēśam* from several gurus. In such cases, a *śishya* learns from several gurus and then goes to the important guru. *Swēthakēthu*'s father *Uddālaka Āruṇi* was the important guru in this case. *Swēthakēthu* has his learning from several people and then comes to his father. The father then tells him something related to the soul and asks him whether he knows it. He does not know it. At this point, the Upanishads say that he said 'my gurus - Bhagavanthah - might not have known this. If they had known they would have told me'. He says 'Bhagavanthah' in plural.

In two such cases in the Upanishads, it is said that when an *āchāryā* tested his *śishyas* without giving *upadēśam*, he found that two divine forces had given them *upadēśam* in a strange manner. Then the *āchāryā* who came to know of it from the *śishyas* also confirmed the *upadēśam*. This has been stated in the form of stories. One of them was *Sathyakāma Jāpālar* about whom we read earlier. Obeying the guru's instructions, he spent his time taking the cows to a lonely place for grazing. The guru was not inclined to teach him. He was testing him. *Sathyakāmar* also remained patient. He returned to the gurukulam after the herd of cows

multiplied and became a thousand. Not being able to control beyond that stage one of the bulls in that herd gave him *upadēsam*. On the next day a hamsa and then a madgu (a bird living in water) gave him *upadēsam*. It is only the divine forces which gave *upadēsam* like this and the guru Haridrumatha Gouthama approved of them and himself gave *upadēsam*.

In the story that follows this (in *Chāndōgyam*) *Sathyakāma Jāpālar* becomes the guru himself and puts his *śishya Upakōsala* to a similar test. Although he spent twelve years in gurukulam, the guru completed *Vidhyābhyāsam* for all other *śishyas* and sent them away. But he did nothing for *Upakōsala*. When he became heart-broken the agnis which the guru was worshipping gave him *upadēsam*. Then the guru approved the *upadēsam* and also completed the Brahma *Vidhyā* which the agni had not taught fully.

Some people may think that all these examples do not come under the category of 'several gurus'. But the guru giving his *upadēsam* after repeated testing, the *śishya* putting up with that and continuing to render service, longing to attain the *Vidhyā* goal - all these are known from these stories and are related to our topic.

There is lot of evidence in the Upanishad for *śishya* receiving *upadēsam* from several gurus in human form.

Bhagawān says in the *Gītā* : '*Upadhēksh - yanthi thē Jnānam jnāninah thathva dharsinah* - go to *jnānis* who know the truth, pay obeisance to them, render service, listen from them the truth, they will give you *jnānōpadēsa* (IV.34). Even when the *Paramāthmā* as guru gives *upadēsam* to Arjuna He has spoken that he has other upagurus also.

Krishna Himself had several gurus. The Kulaguru of Yadhu *Vamśa* was *Gargāchārya*. He was the one who performed 'upanayanam' for *Bhagawān*. *Bhagawān* did *gurukulavāsam* and

Vidhyābhyāsam under *Sāndhīpani*. We have seen in the *Chāndōgya* story that he had introduced himself to the rishi *Gōra Āngīras*, as *Dēvakī Puthra* and received *upadēsam* from him.

We have also seen the example of *Dattātrēya*. But since he did not receive *upadēsam* from the 24 things, animals etc but had learnt a lesson from each of them, there is justification to say that they were called guru as a formality. But at the end of their story, he has said something which adds strength to our story.

Na hyēkasmādh gurōr Jnānam susthiram syāth supushkalam
(*Bhāgavatham* 11.9.31)

This means that it may happen that complete and firm *jnāna* may not be obtained from a single guru. This is the general statement, not meant for all.

Having said this in the first part of the *ślōka* in the last part he refers to the broad principle of our *Vēdānthā* religion:

Brahmaithath adhvithīyam vai kīyathē bahudharshibhih

This means 'the one *Brahmam* which does not have a second is praised by several rishis in different ways'; that is *Upadēsa* is given.

Our topic is that it may happen that one may not be able to attain complete *jnāna* from one guru. This means that one can go to other gurus also.

Dattātrēya is one of the earliest founders of our (adhvaitha) *sampradhāya*. In the *vimāna* of the sannidhi of our *Āchāryā* in *Kāmākshi Ambāl* temple, there are figures for all those who come in the lineage of *Pūrvāchārya*. *Dattātrēya* is on top of all of them.

More than that, if our *Āchāryā* himself had praised someone who had several gurus, nothing more need be said. Each section in *Bruhadāraṇyakam* has the name of *Brāhmaṇam*. I have mentioned earlier about *Vamśa Brāhmaṇam*. There is a section called

Shadāchārya Brāhmaṇam. It means a *Brāhmaṇam* about six *āchāryās*. Janaka who is glorified as a *rājarishi* had six *āchāryās*. Even while discharging all the duties of a great king, within him he was in the state of *samādhi*. Krishna has quoted him as example for a *karmayōgi*.

There were six - *Jīthvar*, *Udhangar*, *Bhargu* and others. *Sathyakāma Jāpālar* who had his *gōthram* after his mother was also one of them. In that *Brāhmaṇam*, Janaka tells *Yājñavalkya* about the *upadēsam* he had received from the six *āchāryās*. He requests *Yājñavalkya*, taking him as the seventh *āchāryā*, to give him *upadēsam*. No one thought that he had done something which was not to be done. From *Āchāryā's Bāshyam* it is seen that *Yājñavalkya* was appreciative of what Janaka has done. It is here our *Āchāryā's* judgement comes.

Even at the start, *Yājñavalkya* tells Janaka 'I want to listen to whatever any one has given you as *upadēsam*'. Here *Āchāryā's bāshyam* is 'you offer obeisance to several *āchāryās*. May I also know what anyone of them has told you?' He has used the word appreciatingly as '*anēkāchārya sēvi*'. From this it is clear that it is *Āchāryā's* view also that one can have several *āchāryās*. When I say that it is his view it is like judgement for us.

Those who were great in our Adhvaitha *sampradhāya* in later days, those who have written excellent books - many of them had more than one guru. I have mentioned above *Vidhyāraṇya's* chief guru *Vidhyā Thīrthā* and *Śankarānandā* whom *Vidhyāraṇya* had worshipped as guru. *Śankarānandā* also was the *śishya* of *Vidhyā Thīrthā*. There is a view that he too had another guru by name *Ananthāthmar*. There was *Madhusūdana Saraswathī* who was an ardent Adhvaithi. But at the same time he had bhakthi for Krishna *Paramāthmā*. He was a great man who brought together the two. '*Sri Rama Viśwēswara Mādhavānathām*' - he has paid obeisance to his three gurus - *Sri Rama*, *Viśwēswara* and *Mādhava*.

There was another great person in our Adhvaitha *sampradhāya* - *Ramathīrthar*. It appears he had three gurus - *Krishnathīrtha*, *Jagannāthāśrami*, *ViśwaVēdha*. Still earlier there was another great person - *Ānandabhōdha* who had two gurus - *Vimukthāthmar*, *Āthmāvāsar*. From all these we see that there is nothing wrong in having more than one guru.

In Sri *Vaishṇava Sampradhāya* also *Rāmānuja* had *Ālavandhār* as his chief guru and *Periya Nambi*, *Thirukachchi Nambi* and *Thirukkōshtiyūr Nambi* as upa-gurus.

Swēthakēthu was the son of rishi *Uddhālaka Āruṇi* who was called *Āruṇi* because he was the son of *Aruna*. Although *Uddhālaka* himself was a great scholar, he sent *Swēthakēthu* to gurukula, since learning will be better only under another person who is strict. Thus he had learning from many great persons for twelve years and returned. Yet when he returned he was full of pride that he had learnt so much. In those times, people were by and large humble, young men and *śishyas* were more so. Contrary to this *Swēthakēthu* had become conceited with his learning.

Probably the father related to him the story of the *Gāndhāra* man only to teach him a lesson by saying that like him the person in the story found the way from several persons. It is not enough if one merely learns like this since one may even become proud and become spoiled and therefore he might have told him about the qualities of scholarship and intellectual brilliance that a *śishya* should have. Retaining the *upadēsam* that has been received is real intellectual ability. *Buddhi* does not mean merely the brain. It is also good learning that makes a person matured. Scholarship also does not mean mere learning. To conduct oneself in accordance with his learning is important. If one gives room for pride these will not materialize. A learning that ends at the level of the brain cannot make a person a real man. That is he cannot be made a person of good quality. It is only by being humble it can be done.

From what is seen later *Swēthakēthu* had great brain power. Therefore, he could understand even if a thing is merely hinted at. If something is told directly one might get angry. It is because one will feel like accepting a thing only if it is merely hinted at, his father might have told him indirectly and left it at that.

It is not possible to make total surrender to a guru and remain in the thought 'let the guru do what he wants'. But the *śishya* should have that attitude as far as possible and has also to make effort by himself. It can therefore be assumed that it is for that reason it has been said that the guru who 'opened the bandage' did not leave him but he also went with him. But what is important is that he had followed the path told by the guru.

* * *

THE GURU WHO SHOWS THE WAY, AS SEEN IN VĒDHĀS

Even in *Vēdhās* - that is in the *Samhithā* portion taught in *pātaśālā* - this idea is there. It may be in many places. But I shall relate what has come to my notice.

Generally another evidence used to be quoted from the *Vēdhās*. There is a well-known '*sūktham*' '*asya vāmasya*' which is quite long. It deals with the creation of the universe, the principles of the Supreme etc and says it in a systematic manner which only the learned and those who have had spiritual experience can understand.

The manthra says 'The true thing is only one and the *jnānis* refer to it in different ways as different gods'. The manthra about the *jīvāthmā* - *Paramāthmā* birds which is in *Muṇḍakōpanishad*, the manthra which says that the '*Nāḍha* thathvam' changes into four stages from the subtle thathva and at the fourth stage it becomes the sound which we pronounce, the *Gaurī* Manthram which is recited during the invocation of *Ambāl* - all the *manthrās* come in the *sūktham*.

In one of the *manthrās* occurring in the beginning it is said 'I do not have *jnāna*. I pray to rishis who are endowed with *jnāna* to give me *upadēsam*'. This which comes from *śishya* is quoted as the authority in *Sruthi* that learning has to be done through guru. In the example that I wanted to give, it is more clearly said that a *śishya* learns only by the guru showing him the way. It is one of the Rig *Vēdha Sūkthās* relating to Indra and comes in the seventh Ashtakam. That *Sūktha* has been given by the rishi Kavashar. In that the '*Akshēthra*vid' (one who does not know the place) finds it out from a '*Kshēthra*vid' (one who knows the place). Having been shown the way by the one who knows the place, he reaches there'. This is how indirectly the *śishya* learning the *sādhana mārga* from the *āchāryā* is mentioned. '*Brahmam* which is the Supreme Truth is the place (goal) to be reached. The guru knows that place and the *śishya* does not know it. The *śishya* learns from him the *sādhana mārga* by which to reach that place and then reaches there' - this is the import of the manthra which has been said indirectly.

Later, realizing that if the important message is given so indirectly it may be missed, with compassion it is openly said 'this is the auspicious glory of the *upadēsam*'. The word used here for *upadēsam* is *anuśāsanam*. This word has been in use to this day.

In Bharatham *Bhīshma's upadēsam* to the *Pāṇḍavās* from his bed of arrows (*śara thalpa*m) is contained in two parvas (parts). The second of this is called '*Anuśāsana Parva*'. It is in this parva *Vishṇu Sahasranāmam* occurs. Making laws, giving orders, rendering advice - all these are covered by *anuśāsanam*.

The *Vēdhā* itself glorifies the guru's *Upadēsa anuśāsana* as *mangalam*. Wherever we use the word *mangalam*, *Vēdhās - Ithihāsas - Purāṇās* use the word 'bhadrham'.

This *Vēdha* manthra also informs why *upadēsam* is *mangalam*. Just as we go unobstructed and straight in the stream of *Śruthi*, one learns the straight path to reach the noble goal and this

is known only by *upadēśam*. Therefore, it becomes *bhadrham*. Here the word used to indicate 'straight' is 'anjasam' which means not only straight but also straightforward.

* * *

GURU AS KSHĒTHRAJNA

We have seen that one who knows the place (the guru) is called *kshēthraavid* and the one who does not know the place (the *sishtya*) is *Akshēthraavid*. The rishi who gave this *sūthram* - Kavashar - did not think about it and selected these words. He was able to conceive these in a flash from *ākāśa*. That is it is *Īśwara*'s words which have come like that through that rishi.

Kshēthram is a place. In the Upanishad story we see that the way to a place called *Gāndhāram* was told. The fields in which crops are raised and the holy places where the crop of *bhakti* grows are called *kshēthras*. In *Vēdānthā*, *kshēthra* is our body. Just as the field (called the *kshēthram*) is there for the farmer to till and grow crops this body is there for the *jīvā* to grow *karmā*. The Lord says in the *Gītā* :

Idham sarīram kaunthēya kshēthram ithyabidhīyathē

(XIII-1)

The chapter in which the *ślōka* appears is itself called 'Kshēthra - Kshēthrajna Vibhaga Yōgam' - it means the *yōga* by which the distinction between *kshēthra* and *Kshēthrajna* is known.

If it is asked 'Who is that *Kshēthrajna*?' it is the soul which gives the life and intelligence to the body. The inert (*jada*) body does not know that it is the *kshēthram*. The one who has known it is the owner of the body, the *Kshēthrajna* :

Yēthadh yō vēththi tham prāhuh Kshēthrajna ithi thadhvidhah

(XIII-1)

When *Kshēthrajna* is in the state of the 'one who knows' he is not in his true form; that is he is not *Brahmam*. He is connected with *māyā*. In the true form there will be nothing to know and he will not have the intelligence to know. It is the state in which he is by himself as the one sathyam; intelligence. Generally, in the world when jadam and *chēthanam* (sentient beings) are talked of, the body which is jada is called *kshēthra* and the *jīvā* who is with the sense related awareness is called *Kshēthrajna*. In *Vēdānthā* the *Kshēthrajna* is raised several steps above the inert body without awareness and is called a *jnāni* who has experience of true *jnāna*. Krishna *Paramāthmā* also has said like that. Yet the anjani who knows the body to be his is called *Kshēthrajna*. It is in this state that *Ambāl* (who protects both *kshēthra* - *Kshēthrajna*) is referred to in *Sahasranāmam* as '*Kshēthra-Kshēthrajna pālīni*'. The *Kshēthrajna* who is in his true form needs no palanam (protection). He is the one who is the *āthmā* for *Ambāl* also. When Krishna *Paramāthmā* says 'it is I who am the *Kshēthrajna* in all the *kshēthras* - '*kshētrajnam chāpi mām viddhi sarva kshēthrēshu*' (XIII.3) - He has given room to understand it as the state in which *māyā* is joined and the state in which *māyā* is not joined. In fact it is three! He has taken the form of all of us, conducting this world of duality as *Īswara*; being the *Nirguṇa Brahman* - unmixed with *māyā*. In all the three different states, he is as *Kshēthrajna* knowing our bodies in three different ways. In the *Nirguṇa* state that 'knowing' is not an action. It is the experience by which it is realized that it is not *kshēthram* at all.

'*Kshēthrajna*' means 'one who knows his *kshēthra*'; the one who knows that the body is his is in the lower state. The *Kshēthrajna* who has experienced the fact that the body is the imagination of the *māyā* and not connected with him who is *Brahma Swarūpam* is the *Kshēthrajna* of a higher state. He is the true *Kshēthrajna*. In other words, *Kshēthrajna* and *jnāni* are one

and the same. Knowing that the body is false he also knows he is *Brahmam* only.

In the *Vēdha* manthra the one who has known the way is called *kshēthravidh*. *Kshēthravidh* also means *Kshēthrajna*. Both 'jna' and 'vidh' indicate 'knowing'. In English 'jna' is written in two ways : 'Jna' and 'Gna'. 'G' has the same sound value as 'J'. The Greek word 'Gnosis' has been taken into English. It means *Jnāna*. Although according to spelling there is 'gno', the 'g' is silent and the word is pronounced as 'nosis'. There is the similar word 'know' in which also the first letter 'k' is silent. It is the 'g' of 'gnosis' which has become 'k' here. It is like our making many Sanskrit words with 'Ga' as with 'Ka'. We have seen *Gāndhār* and *Kāndhār*.

It is from the Sanskrit 'vidh' the word 'wit' has come. We have understood 'wit', 'witty' to mean 'joke'. Really speaking the important meaning for 'wit' is intelligence. We use it in that sense when we say outwit.

Kshēthravidh appearing in the *Vēdhās* is *Kshēthrajna* mentioned by *Bhagawān* in the *Gītā*. When understood in this manner the meaning of that manthra is 'the *śishya* who is *ajnāni* learns from the guru the way for liberation and goes on that path. Finally he progresses towards the Supreme Truth according to his *upadēsam*. This is the *upadēsam* which is supremely auspicious (*Mangalam*). Instead of swimming against the current of a flood that flows in one direction just as one can easily float and move along with the flood that *jnāni* also gets to know the true and straight path to liberation and reaches there'.

What is mentioned in the Upanishad story is the way in a forest. One has to go from village to village (to reach the final place). This is said in the manner of creating a scare. But in *samhithā* (the first part of *Vēdhā*) there is no such scare or threat

but is like a joyful boat ride downstream! It is because of the guru's grace. What another Upanishad calls as razor's edge is stated here as a happy journey. An English novelist who is drawn to our *Vedānthā* has given Razor's Edge as the title for one of his novels which has become famous.

In Upanishad the gurus who have attained the outstanding state among men are referred to as 'varar'. *Āchāryā* has referred to them as 'thath-vidhah'. 'Thath' the *Brahmam*. 'Vidhaha' - those who have realized. The Upanishad says that such 'varar' should be taken as guru. *Āchāryā* also has said 'upanishad shows the way with great love like a mother; '*Śruthih anukampamāh māthruvath*'. One need not fear that Brahma *Vidhyā* has been called a razor's edge. *Āchāryā* has said that the Guru's prasād which is like the mother's love will blunt it and make it smooth.

GURU : FOR THE FINAL GOAL AND INTERMEDIATE STAGES

From time immemorial there have been gurus who had shown the way to each stage apart from the guru who showed the way till the end. From the Upanishad it is seen that there have been instances when a particular *Vidhyā* was learnt under a particular guru and for learning other *Vidhyās* other gurus had been sought.

There were also *śishyas* who were not concerned about different *vidhyās* but had for their goal only *sākshāthkāram* and wanted only the means (*sāadhanā mārgam*) to attain the same. Similarly, there were also gurus who had given *upadēsam* of Brahma *Vidhyā* which is inclusive of all *vidhyās*, all by themselves. For the generality of people he might have given *upadēsam* of *karmānushtānam*, bhakthi *sthōthrā*, *pūjā* etc but to those who had attained maturity he would have given *upadēsam* which centered on '*sākshāthkāram*'.

What is to be noted is that even the gurus who were Brahma *Jnānis* themselves, depending on the state of maturity of the

śishyas, instead of giving *upadēsam* of Brahma *Vidhyā* gave *upadēsam* of other *vidhyās* which were in the nature of subsidiary, preliminary, auxiliary, ancillary etc.

Another fact is that it is not necessary that a guru who was the Brahma *Jnāni* should have known all other *Vidhyās*. Since they had known the infinite basic principle which encompasses everything they need not have known other *Vidhyās* individually. In such a case the guru who gives *upadēsam* of Brahma *Vidhyā* was taken as the chief guru.

* * *

THE ENTIRE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GURU IS FOR ŚISHYA

All the gurus who had come in the tradition of *Sanāthana* Dharma would pass on to the *śishya* all that they have known or experienced about any *Vidhyā* entirely. One will be surprised to find how the gurus had felt duty bound to pass on to the *śishya* everything so liberally. *Āchāryā* who was such a guru has spoken of it as being something very ordinary or usual by saying 'after all the guru is there only for that purpose'. This will be seen from his *bāshyam* on '*Muṇḍakōpanishad*'.

In that Upanishad where the first section ends it is stated that even if a person is noble with determination (*vairāgya*) he must approach a guru with humility to get Brahma *Jnānam*. Then it is said that the guru too will give complete *upadēsam* of Brahma *Vidhyā* as it is to the *śishya* who comes to him in the appropriate manner. In the original it is said that the guru 'gave *upadēsam*'. Earlier it is said in a general manner applicable to all gurus that the guru 'will give *upadēsam*'. *Āchāryā* in his *bāshyam* has clarified this to be a duty of the guru and says 'he must give *upadēsam*'. For the original '*prōvācha*' he has given the meaning '*prabrūyāth*'.

What does it mean to say that *upadēsam* should be given 'as it is?' It means the entire truth should be told without anything

being curtailed. *Āchāryā* indicates this by a small word 'yathavath'. This word also means 'in the manner laid down', 'in a straightforward manner', 'according to rules'. That is nothing should be cut out and no personal opinion should be added. The *Brahma Vidhyā Śāsthram* as it has come traditionally should be protected and given.

It is in this context *Āchāryā* has pointed out the guru's duty. He says '*āchāryasya niyamam*'. 'Niyamam' here means 'duty'. In words such as 'Yathi niyamam', 'Brahmachari niyamam', 'Gruhastha niyamam' it means the rules applicable to them. Since things have to be done according to such rules that becomes the duty. When it is said that doing *sandhyāvandanam* is the niyamam for *brahmachāri*, it means that it is the duty too. In *śāsthās* duties have been laid down as niyamam. The direct meaning is 'discipline'.

* * *

THE DUTY OF ĀCHĀRYĀ AS LAID DOWN BY OUR ĀCHĀRYĀ

What is the niyamam our *Āchāryā* has laid down for an *āchāryā*?

As already mentioned the niyamam for an *āchāryā* is to teach fully the *Vidhyā* which he knows. But that is only means. The duty of a present day teacher is like that - ending with teaching. But that is not the duty of a true *āchāryā*. In olden times, it was considered that the duty of a true *āchāryā* was to ensure that his student lived according to what he had learnt. The student should benefit in his life by what he had learnt. That is the goal, the end. If a guru gives *upadēsam* of *Brahma Vidhyā* according to the rules, it is done as a means to make the *śishya* cross the ocean of *samsāra*. His goal is to reach him to the shore, to redeem him. That is '*upēyam*'. The means for it, the '*upāyam*' is to teach him. *Āchāryā*

says that the guru making the *śishya* attain the goal through this *upāyam* is his duty.

* * *

SADHGURU AND SADHŚISHYA

Just as there is Sadhguru there is also *Sadhśishya*. Sadhguru is one who gives *upadēsam* of Brahma *Vidhyā* to the *śishya* and makes him experience the fruits of his *upadēsam*. Similarly, *Sadhśishya* is one who has good qualities, particularly submissiveness, sharp intellect, *jijnāsa* which is real thirst for *jnāna* etc. He is one who follows the ways of *Śāsthrā* and traditions. *Āchāryā* says that it is the duty of the *āchāryā* to redeem such a *śishya* from the ocean of *samsāra*. He says 'Nyāya praptha sachchishyan'. It means that the *śishya* who approaches the guru according to the rules laid down in *śāsthrās* is one of high merit. *Āchāryā* says that it is the duty of the guru to rescue him from the ocean of ignorance.

* * *

THE ENTIRE 'WEALTH' OF THE GURU IS FOR THE ŚISHYA

Just as a father passes on the entire wealth to his son, the guru should teach to the *śishya* all that he knows. If a father has more than one son, he cannot give his entire wealth to each of them. But a guru can pass on his entire *vidhyā* to each of the *śishyas* irrespective of their number. This is the greatness of the *vidhyā*. That is a 'Sri' (wealth) that does not diminish however much it may be divided.

Unless the guru has great love for his *śishya*, has the involvement to show him the way and has bhakthi and love towards that *vidhyā* itself which makes him feel that it should not

die with him but should reach others, he cannot teach the *vidhyā* fully. These days we can see such a thing only rarely. From what the many people who are great in different fields, talk about their teachers, it is seen that there are such teachers. Many young people present their thesis to me. From what they say it appears that there are several teachers who teach in an excellent manner. But I hear complaints too to the contrary. But what we find from Upanishad is that with very few exceptions all the *āchāryās* gave *Upadēśa* of what they had learnt fully to the *śishya*.

Sometime back I had quoted from *Praśnōpanishad* that at its end that *śishyas* tell the *āchāryā* 'you who have taken us across the ocean of ignorance and reached us to the shore are our real father'. I shall now talk about the beginning of that Upanishad.

Six people set out as *śishyas*. Each of them is qualified to be a guru himself - *Sukēśar*, *Sathyakāmar*, *Gārgyar*, *Kousalyar*, *Bhārgavar*, *Kabhandhi*. They too have still to learn something in Brahma *Vidhyā*. They desire to know it. They approached a maharishi *Pippalādhār* whom the upanishad describes as Bhagawantha. They all take samid to be offered to the guru. Samid means mere twig which is used in *hōma*. Mere twig was considered a great *dakshiṇā* by the rishis and gurus. They were so simple. That is indicative of their culture due to which they had greater regard for the attitude of the person who offered something much more than that thing itself.

This shows that if the *śishyas* were deserving, *vidhyā* was taught to them without any consideration of *dakshiṇā*. There is another thing related to this. If a *śishya* was not deserving of the *vidhyā* those gurus did not accept him irrespective of the size of the *dakshiṇā* he could offer. The rishi who was giving *Upadēśa* of Madhu *Vidhyā* has said 'even if one can give as *dakshiṇā* the whole world, *upadēśam* should not be given if he is not deserving'.

Sukēsar and the others went to *Pippalādhara* with the *samīd*. Six people who were learned told each other frankly that their *vidhyā jñānam* was not complete and set out as *śishyas*. From this their humility and their thirst for *Vidhyā* can be seen. 'Vidhyā Vināya Sampanna' is what is said in our tradition. It appears that this was not merely a saying but was being practiced. Those people went to *Pippalādhara* because they knew that he had complete knowledge of Brahma *Vidhyā*. Between them they told that he would give them full *upadēśam* of what he knew.

When they reached him he told them 'Be here performing *thapas* with self-control for a year. Then you ask me whatever you want. If I know what you ask I shall tell you the whole thing'. I have said this to show that a guru will not refrain from teaching to the *śishya* all that he knows.

Here I remember something about *Yājñavalkya*. *Yājñavalkya* goes on giving several *upadēśam* to Janaka. After listening to each *upadēśam* Janaka overwhelmed with joy offered a thousand cows along with elephant-like bulls. *Yājñavalkya* tells him 'I have heard that you have told me that *dakṣhiṇā* should not be accepted till the *upadēśam* is given completely' and refuses what is offered to him. We see from this that the guru is more keen to teach the *śishya* completely and not so much about *dakṣhiṇā*.

* * *

MORE LESSONS ABOUT GURU-ŚISHYA

In the story in *Praśnōpanishad* when talking about giving *upadēśam* fully several facts concerning the characteristics of guru and *śishya* were also given.

First of all since the rishi told that the six persons that they should do *thapas* for one more year it is clear that the rishi knows that they were already doing the *anushtānās* well. Still he tells

them to do thapas for one more year and observe all the other disciplines applicable to *śishyas*. Why? They should live with him and prove to him their worth so that he can be sure about it. Here we get evidence that the highest truth should be given as *Upadēśa* only to those whose fitness to receive it has been proved. Another reason could be that since they had already learnt much it was possible they had developed ego. Fresh *upadēśam* can be absorbed by them only if they have not developed ego. To test this he might have said it. Since it is the characteristic of the *śishya* to obey whatever the guru says he might have tested them to see if they have this quality. It could also be because even if they had developed a little ego, a thapas to be performed for a year will destroy it.

In this several qualities that are necessary for a *śishya* are known. Since the rishi tells them to do thapas with brahmacharyam and *śraddhā* it is clear that these are the necessary qualities of the *śishya*. Thapas means to remain involved in a single goal without minding the physical discomforts. *Śraddhā* means faith - the unassailable faith that what the *śāsthrās* say and the guru says are the highest truth - which will do us good. *Āchāryā* used to interpret *śraddhā* as 'āsthika buddhi'.

If a *śishya* obeys the guru like this and conducts himself it is possible only if he has the most important quality of a *śishya* namely humility and submissiveness.

* * *

EXPLANATION OF ŚISHYA

If the chief characteristic of a *śishya* is humility what are his other characteristics? If we try to find out the meaning for the word '*śishya*', ancients have defined it in three different ways. '*Siksha*' means to teach. One who gets taught or tutored is a

sishya. It is '*Śikshyan*' which has become '*sishya*'. The root word is '*Śiksh*' which means reading, gaining knowledge.

Another: there is the word '*sēsham*' derived from '*śish*'. Whatever is left behind we call '*sēsham*'. Those who are different from the ordinary run of people and are at higher level are '*sēshar*'. '*Śishta*' also is from this root. One who was an ordinary person gets transformed into a '*Sēshan*', '*Śikshan*' by the teaching of guru and therefore becomes a '*sishya*'. Awarding punishment is also called '*śiksha*'. The punishment meted out by a king is called '*Rāja Śiksha*'. In the same manner one who punishes his senses so that they do not wander is a *sishya*.

Another characteristic of a *sishya* is to be humble. That is why *sishya* is also called '*Vinīthan*'.

Since he lives with the guru, he is also called '*anthēvāsi*'. My feeling is that instead of taking '*anthē*' as 'with' or 'along with' 'inside' is a better word. He not only lives with the guru but he has to find place in the guru's heart.

* * *

GURU'S HUMILITY

From the *Praśnōpanishad* that we have seen it appears that not only the *sishya* but the guru too will be humble. The rishi tells the six persons 'you ask me. If I know it I will tell you fully'. *Āchāryā's* *bāshyam* says that this shows his '*anuththathvam*'. '*Uththathi*' means 'pride, haughtiness'. '*Anuthath*' means being without pride, that is being humble.

Here, *Āchāryā* puts it beautifully in his *bāshyam* : 'Later on, the rishi gives correct replies to all the questions asked by the six persons and makes everything clear to them. Therefore when he said 'I will tell you if I know it' was not because of want of knowledge or doubt about the matter but because of his humility'.

As the converse of the rule that the *sishya* should be humble before the guru when a guru himself shows humility to *sishya* it means that the Upanishad says that all gurus should be like that.

Thaithirīyōpanishad rishi - that is guru - keeps praying that a large number of *brahmachāris* should come to him. This shows how the gurus of those times lovingly welcomed the taking over of the responsibility for a boy's life and kept him with them. That rishi puts it like this - *sishyas* should come to him the way water flows towards the deep gorge and the way the months together make a year.

Both the comparisons are appropriate. If water does not flow into the gorge the gorge has no use. The view implied here is that the life of a great scholar becomes a waste if he does not get *sishyas*. A mere deep pit which is dry is dangerous. If it is filled with water it will be useful to many. What is seen here is that the guru thinks that it is the *sishya* who ensures that his own life is not wasted but becomes useful to the society.

The guru not only sacrifices for the *sishyas* but gives them elevated status with the attitude that it is they who makes his life a real life. When we say he makes sacrifice for the *sishya* it means he gives them something from a higher level, does good to them. When it is said that it is they (*sishyas*) who make his life real it means they are the givers. When he gives they offer obeisance to him. When they give him it is his gratitude to them. Deep in this there will be only humility.

Thus in our *Sanāthana* Dharma it is so arranged that the guru also should have the attitude of humility towards the *sishyas*. When it is said he should be humble it does not mean that he openly shows submissiveness. That cannot be. It is bad for the *sishya* himself. It means that he should have that attitude in his mind.

* * *

NOT JUST BEING HUMBLE BUT TELLING THE WHOLE TRUTH

I have said that a guru told the six *śishyas* with humility 'I will tell you if I know it'. That is the beginning of the *Praśnōpanishad*. Then the guru had given complete answers to the queries of each of them. There are thus six sections each of which has been given the name *praśnam*.

Praśnam means a question. After giving detailed replies to all the six questions at the conclusion of the Upanishad the guru (who had in the beginning said 'I will tell you if I know it') says with the same humility 'I have known *Brahmam* only to this extent'.

But because out of humility he said like this the *śishyas* should not think that there is more to be learned and think about whom to approach for the same. To ensure that they do not have such doubts but feel sure that they have received the *upadēśam* in full, he also says 'there is nothing more than this'.

Even a guru who has the wealth of humility has the chief function of removing the *śishyas'* confusion. That is what *Bhagawān* did for Arjuna. The very first chapter has the title '*Vishāda yōgam*' which describes Arjuna's confusion. In order to end that confusion *Bhagawān* gave *upadēśam* in the seventeen chapters that followed. When that is so the rishi rightly thought that by his very humility he should not create fresh confusion in the minds of the *śishyas* and therefore said at the end 'there is nothing more than this'. It was at that stage that the *śishya* offered obeisance to him saying 'you who have taken us across the ocean of ignorance and reached us to the shore are our father'.

* * *

GURU'S UPADĒŚAM CANNOT BE COMPENSATED FOR

In the above context, the Upanishad does not say the word '*namaskār*' but '*archanā*'. These days *archanā* has come to be

understood as offering flowers or kumkum at the feet of the deity while repeating the names of the deity. That too is right. But the wider meaning of doing *archanā* is to do *pūjā*. *Āchāryā* in his *bāshyam* says that they offered flowers at the feet of the guru, touched his feet with their heads. He has also said something more beautifully. Feeling gratified that they have achieved the fruits of their liking, thought about what they could offer in return for the *Vidhyā*. They could not find anything. They thought 'whatever *dakshiṇā* is given to the guru, it will not compensate for his *upadēsam*'. *Āchāryā* says at the beginning of his *Upadēsa Sahasrī* 'even if the whole world with all its wealth is given to the guru as *dakshiṇā*, guru's *upadēsam* is greater than that'. The six *śiṣhyas* concluded that nothing could compensate for the *upadēsam* and therefore offered *pushpānjali* and touched his feet with their heads.

Our *Āchāryā* never added anything to the original matter for the purpose of his *bāshyam*. From the fact that such a person has given such a long explanation for a small word 'archayantha' shows how much guru bhakthi he himself had and how much he was interested in making it clear to the people that they should show bhakthi to the guru with gratitude.

The Upanishad ends by saying that when the six *śiṣhyas* offered obeisance to the rishi they thought of all rishis and said 'obeisance to all the great rishis, all the great rishis'. According to *Āchāryā's* *bāshyam* they repeated like this twice to show respect.

* * *

UPADĒSAM THAT COMES AS A TRADITION

If we take the father there is a line of ancestors starting from his father. Even during *srāddhā* we remember the grandfather and the great grandfather and others. Similarly since the guru is also

considered a father his lineage (guru *paramparā*) also has to be remembered with gratitude and worshipped. What is mentioned in the original as 'parama rishis' has been commented upon by Āchāryā as '*Brahma Vidhyā Sampradhāya Karthās*'.

Only a *Upadēsa* that has come traditionally in a line has weight. The power of '*anushtānā*' of each one in that lineage and the power of his experience will only be strong and also strengthen what is sathyam and what is good. If several people have followed a thing for generations and were successful and became benefited from it the goal that they had in view must be sathyam. In the name of free thinking etc if we try to find out for ourselves with our little brain that cannot be firm truth.

* * *

ONE WHO VIOLATES TRADITION IS 'STUPID' - ĀCHĀRYĀ

Āchāryā used to say that one who talks contrary to tradition is stupid. Āchāryā was personification of compassion. When such a person speaks so harshly how can we avoid telling what he considered to be absolute truth? It is only for the good of the people, to guide them on the right path, he says out of compassion but in strict terms 'follow the tradition (*sampradhāya*). Do not get spoiled by taking your own decisions'. If someone ignores a fine tradition that has come through generations and obstinately spoils himself is he not stupid? That is what Āchāryā has said.

About the one who introduces new meanings into *sāsthrās* Āchāryā says in his *Gītā bāshyam* that he is a '*āthmahā*', that is one who has killed himself, a stupid person; although he is stupid he does not keep his mouth shut but tries to give *upadēsam* to others. Therefore, Āchāryā says that even if he has studied all the *sāsthrās* he should be ignored as being stupid.

* * *

ĀCHĀRYĀ'S BHAKTHI TO GURU PARAMPARA

Āchāryā's regard for a guru *paramparā* which has come in the tradition, is beyond description. I have already said that it is rarely that he speaks beyond what is said in the original. But he has done such a thing in regard to one topic when concluding his *bāshyam* on Upanishad.

Āchāryā has written *bāshyam* for the ten Upanishads (*Daśōpanishad*) starting from *Īśāvāsyam* and upto *Bṛuhadāraṇyakam*. Although there are *bāshyas* in his name for some other Upanishads also, these ten are considered prominent. Of this both the first and the last Upanishads belong to *Sukla Yajurvedha*. At the conclusion of the last Upanishad he gives a list of all the rishis - I have said earlier that by and large rishis have been mentioned with reference to their mothers - changing it to the lineage of fathers and gives upto and ends with '*Prajāpati Brahman*'. The Upanishad concludes with obeisance to that Brahman.

Here the word 'Brahma' can be understood as *Brahmā* the deity or *Vēdhā* which is *Sabhdha* Brahman. We can take it that *Vēdhā* itself has been personified as *Ādhi* Guru. Since everything comes from the Parabrahmam it can also be taken as that *Brahmam*. Āchāryā thought 'how can we end the *namaskāram* with the *Ādhi* Guru only? Should we not include the entire chain of guru *paramparā* that has come from that original?' Therefore at the close of the *bāshyam* after saying '*Brahmanē Namah*' which is in the original added '*Namah Thath - Anuvarthibyō Gurubyah*'. It means obeisance to the gurus - the guru *paramparā* - who follow *Brahmam* which is *Vēdhā*.

At the beginning of his *bāshyam* for *Thaithirīyōpanishad* in the *mangala ślōka* he has offered his obeisance to all the gurus before him who had written *bāshyam*. He says 'I pay obeisance to

them daily'. He praises their scholarship by saying that they had given meaning to Upanishad on the basis of 'padam' which is 'Vyākarnā', Vākyam which is Mīmāṃsa Śāsthṛā, Pramāṇam which is Nyāya Śāsthṛam:

*Yairimē gurubhiḥ pūrvam padha vākya Pramāṇathah
Vyākyaṭhāḥ sarvavēdānthās thān nithyam praṇathōsmayaham.*

This is a *ślōka* which all of us have to recite as obeisance to the Brahma Vidhyā Guru Paramparā.

* * *

ONE WHO NEVER SAYS A THING HE DOES NOT KNOW

We have seen that a guru will teach the *śishya* all that he knows. But he will not also do something which ordinary teachers might do. That is, he will not fabricate something and tell them when he really does not know it. The guru who teaches 'sathyam vadhah' (speak the truth) will be the one who follows that dictum in his life. Therefore if he does not know a thing he will tell the students so and direct them to someone who knows it. I shall now give an example of this from the concluding part of *Praśnōpanishad*.

A prince of *Khōsala* by name *Hiraṇyanābhan* comes to the rishi *Sukēsar* for learning. That *Sukēsar* was the same who was one of the six who went to *Pippalādhār* maharishi (discussed earlier). He was the one who asked the sixth and the last question. The prince had gone to him before that time to ask the same question which *Sukēsar* had asked *Pippalādhār* much later. The question was : ' A *jīvā* has sixteen aspects. These are called *kalā*. We say that the moon has *kalā*. The third day moon we call as *Chandrakalā*. One with such sixteen aspects is a *jīvā* called *Shōdaśakalā purushā*'. It is about this the prince asked *Sukēsar*. At that time *Sukēsar* was not knowing the answer.

Sukēsar could have fabricated some answer and told the prince. It was a matter of pride for him that a prince had come to him asking the question. Moreover he would have given him a lot of gifts but since he was honest like the gurus of ancient times he told the prince that he did not know the answer.

The prince did not believe that *Sukēsar* did not know it. The Upanishad does not say this openly. But *Āchāryā* has added it in his *bāshyam*. But only by adding it there will be proper link with the sentence that follows.

The prince doubted whether at all the rishi would not be knowing it. He thought 'perhaps I do not deserve to know it but he does not want to point it out and therefore downgrades himself'. In fact he explains this to *Sukēsar*. *Sukēsar* tells the prince 'If I have known it why will I not tell you?'

After this he tells the prince what great sin it is to give *upadēsam* of something which one does not know but pretends to know. We usually say that 'the mouth that speaks lies will not get food'. But the Upanishad says something more fearful through the rishi's words. The rishi says that one who gives false *upadēsam* will completely perish like a tree that becomes dried up right upto its root and perishes. *Āchāryā*'s *bāshyam* for this is that he will perish, losing this world and the next.

Āchāryā says that from this story two conclusions are drawn. One is that when a person who is deserving approaches another who knows the thing in the proper manner the latter must teach him that. The other is that one who does not know a thing should not make false pretence that he knows it. *Āchāryā* says '*Sarvāsyapi avasthēshu*' - never, in no state.

That great person who enjoyed the status of a guru - *Sukēsar* - when he confirmed his lack of knowledge that prince of Khosla 'closed his mouth' and went away in his chariot. For 'closing the

mouth' *Āchāryā* has given the reason as 'vr̥dithah'. That means he felt ashamed and due to that he could not talk.

If he (*Sukēsar*) did not know why should the prince feel ashamed? He could have felt ashamed feeling 'Poor man! He is a great person. He knows so much. There is some little thing which he does not know. I asked him about that which he does not know and put him to the plight of openly pleading his ignorance of it. This is not culture'. *Sukēsar* was not embarrassed because the prince had asked him something which he did not know. It was because he was not embarrassed, later he narrates to *Pippalādhara* this incident in the normal manner and asks him about *Shōdasa Kalā*. Still the prince might have felt he should not have asked him and thought that he had done something which should not have been done.

* * *

MAKING SURE OF THE GURU'S QUALIFICATION AND DOING SURRENDER

In the above story, probably there is evidence for something big. The prince could have felt ashamed because he thought that he had gone to someone without making sure about his proficiency. This means that only after making sure of the guru's proficiency and competence the *śishya* could go to him and seek *upadēśam*. If it is not done that way but if it is found that a guru is not capable after having gone to him then one has to leave him. Just as the guru has to properly assess the worth of the *śishya* who comes to him, the *śishya* also should go to a guru only after ascertaining his qualifications to give him *upadēśam*.

Here a big question arises : 'What is important is total surrender to the guru. That is the *śishya*'s duty and dharma. Irrespective of how the guru is he should not leave him - it is like 'pathi bhakthi'. But what is said here is contrary to this concept'.

The answer is : 'A guru should be chosen only after knowing well his proficiency and qualification. Then the surrender should be done only to him. Later, even if he is found to be somewhat different (from what a *śishya* had thought) the *śishya* should not change his mind even a bit and continue to regard him as his refuge.

* * *

THE NOBLE CULTURE OF THE GURU HIMSELF BECOMING A ŚISHYA:

A *dēśikar* must be a guide. To reach the same goal there will be several paths. It is not necessary that the *dēśikar* should show the way on all the paths nor is it possible except for persons like our *Āchāryā* and *Vidhyārāṇyar* who were sarvajna. In such a situation if someone asks for a way which the *dēśika* does not know, he must tell him so without feeling embarrassed. If he who is a guru becomes a *śishya* to another guru just to know that particular path that is also fine. The Upanishad rishi whom we have been considering was like that. To know about '*Shōdasakalā purushā*' he went to *Pippalādhār* with all humility. He told him 'I am asking about the same *purushā* about whom another person had asked me'. Here in his *bāshyam*, *Āchāryā* says 'From the time he asked me that question has been deeply ingrained in my mind. He was feeling so much in the thought 'Can I be like this without knowing it? Can I be a guru without being able to answer a question asked by a *śishya* who came to me?'

The *dēśika* who occupies the top position is one who as far as possible has learned all the ways and then gives *upadēsam* of the same.

There was, as an exception, a guru who was proud that he knew everything. He was a rishi who was of Garga *gōthra*. Those who belong to that *gōthra* are called '*Gārgyar*'. In the Upanishad

this particular rishi is called by that name. His father's name was *Balākā*. On the basis of that name he used to be called '*Bālāki*'. The Upanishad has given the name 'Druptha' *Bālāki* 'Druptha' means one who is proud.

That rishi went to the king of *Kāsi*, *Ajāthasathru* and volunteered to give him *upadēśam*. He named the sun, moon, the five elements, the directions, image, shadow - thus he talked of ten or twelve and said they are all Brahma *Swarūpam*. Whatever he called *Brahmam* was about *Brahmam* that appears to be bound by *māyā* and not *Brahmam* which is beyond and free from the bondage of *māyā*. True *jñāna* is to know everything as the make up form of that *Brahmam*. Teaching that is Brahma *Vidhyā*.

What the rishi told *Ajāthasathru* was already known to him. Over and above that he also knew the real Brahma *Vidhyā*. Therefore as the rishi started telling one by one *Ajāthasathru* interrupted him saying 'Stop' and told him in brief the truth he had learnt about each of them.

After saying several things when Druptha *Bālāki* referred to the *ātmā* of a *jīvā* also as *Brahmam* bound by *Māyā* the king explained this as *Brahmam* untainted by *Māyā*. It is to know this there is Brahma *Vidhyā* and the tradition is there of the guru who gives *upadēśam* of the same and the *śishya* who learns it. When the king said it so briefly, Druptha *Bālāki* remained mouth shut.

Ajāthasathru asked him 'Have you told all that you wanted to tell?'

The rishi said 'Yes'.

The king said 'with what you have said one cannot get Brahma *Jñānam*'.

Immediately the rishi who had the nick name 'Dhruptha' became humble and told the king 'if that is so I shall learn from you as a *śishya*'.

One who went to give *upadēsam* says 'I will receive *upadēsam*'. The rishi is a brahmin. He goes to a kshathriya king treating him as guru and becomes his *śishya*.

Although both *Swēthakēthu* and *Bālāki* were proud, since they were keen to learn the *Sadhvidhyā* they realized there is some *Vidhyā* which they did not know and there was someone who knew it, gave up their pride and received *upadēsam* with humility. This humility was also born out of their having learnt other *Vidhyās* according to tradition and because the power of that tradition was embedded deep inside the pride as a seed which later sprouted. The personal humility and the grace of the guru would have created the keenness to learn and also the humility of the *śishyas* and made them surface at the appropriate time.

* * *

HALF-BAKED KNOWLEDGE IS PRIDE PERFECT KNOWLEDGE IS HUMILITY

Those with half-baked knowledge develop pride about their learning. Those who are really well learned will be simple and humble. There is a *ślōka* of Barthruhari :

Yadhā kinchidh jñō(a)ham dhvipa iva madhāndhah samabhavam
Thadhā sarvajñō(a)smīthyabhāvath - avaliptham mama manah
Yadhā kinchith kinchith budhajana sakāsāthavagatham
Thadhā mūrko(a)smithi jvara iva madhō mē vyapagathah

He says this keeping himself in view : When I had learnt a little I was feeling proud that I was a Sarvajna. It is only after I got the association (*sathsangam*) of men of knowledge I gradually learnt more and more and I realized that I was a fool who knew nothing. The pride that had over powered me like a fever also left me'. It is to be noted that he is using the same word '*mūrka*' as *Āchāryā* has used.

That rishi was rid of the fever of being a 'dhrupthan' and with that the pride of learning and the pride about his clan, Without minding that he was a Brahmin and the king was a kshathriya he requested *Ajāthaśathru* to give him *upadēsam*. Because of his concern for tradition, *Ajāthaśathru* initially resisted saying 'there is no custom like this'. But when he saw that the rishi was keen he gave him *upadēsam*.

There is another story like this. I have said earlier that *Swēthakēthu* went to a *rājarishi* named *Pravāhaṇār* and was put to shame and he came to his father and complained with anger. The father instead of becoming angry thought that if he did not know what the king knew he had to go to him immediately and learn from him. One who was guru was a Brahmin rishi. He was ready to become a *śishya* to a kshathriya. He told the son 'All right come let us go to him and learn as *śishyas*'.

The son who was keen to learn *Sadhvidhyā* was usually inclined to learn from others what he did not know. But being a youth his mind revolted against going to the same person who had put him to shame. He told the father 'you may go' and he himself did not go. The father unmindful of honour or dishonour went alone.

What is generally said is that a student is called a *Vidhyārthi* because he has to treat *vidhyā* as 'artham' (wealth), learn more and more things and increase that wealth. He has to be without pride and remain humble. That is why he is called 'Vinīthan'. But here *Swēthakēthu* who is of the age of a *śishya* did not care for *Vidhyā* and his father who was a guru was *Vinītha* and *Vidhyārthi*. *Uddhālaka Āruṇi* went to *Pravāhaṇār* and requested him to give *Upadēsa* of the *Vidhyā* which he did not know. *Pravāhaṇār* hesitated in the manner of *Ajāthaśathru*. *Uddhālaka* pressurized him and received *upadēsam* from him - the Upanishad thus gives

the example of a guru who downgrades himself in order to learn a *Vidhyā* he does not know.

For this great quality of *Uddhālaka Āruṇi Chāndōgyam* gives another example. Five people who were highly qualified in *Vēdhic* studies and were called 'Mahāsrōthriyar' go to *Uddhālaka* to know from him something spiritual. The moment he sees them he says 'If it is something which these great persons do not know I too will not be knowing it. Therefore let me take them to king *Aśvapathi* who knows everything. I will also know along with them'. He thinks like this as a simple person and in a plain manner. Thus all of them go to *Aśvapathi* and though they are Brahmins because of their keen desire to learn they received *upadēsam* from *Aśvapathi* who was a kshathriya.

The reason why I say this is : One who has to show the way has to first know it. One who thinks he knows it and then finds that he really does not know it, should admit it whole - heartedly and must come down from the status of a guru to that of a *śishya* without embarrassment and learn it. He has to know things even from one who is lower in status. The guru must know to be a *śishya* all the time to anyone*.

(**Mahāswāmi* himself was an excellent example of this. No one could equal him in his keenness to know from anyone about any art and field of knowledge by close questioning. Once a person asked him straightaway why he was not objecting to be addressed as Jagadguru. He told him without being affected in any manner 'in the rules of Sanskrit grammar there is what is called '*Bahuvrīhi samāsam*'. According to that Jagadguru gets the meaning 'one who has the entire world as his guru. Keeping that in mind I have accepted without objection the title Jagadguru which has come by virtue of this *pītam*.'')

One who guides should as far as possible have known all the paths - he must be a *Vidhyārthi* all the time. The one who keeps

knowing the paths throughout life and tells others is a *dēśika*. It is only the one who knows the way that can show it to others. In the case of a guru this would mean 'he must have known by experience what he is telling'.

In Western countries it is said that a preacher is no good and that a teacher is required. Preacher is one who just tells others. They make the distinction that a preacher has only that objective but a teacher follows what he teaches others and shows them by personal example. The word 'preacher' is a derivative of '*prachāra*'; it is said 'teach' was formed from Greek which means 'showing'. Showing means showing the way, showing by personal example. When that is so the guru is not only the one who shows the way but one who himself becomes the path. He also becomes the goal to which the path leads. This is what the Bible calls 'Way and the Goal'.

* * *

PURŌHITHAR

One more name of a guru remains to be dealt with - *Purōhithar*. Many people pronounce this word as '*prōhithar*'. This is not correct. The original Sanskrit word is only '*Purōhithar*'. Pura means before. *Purāṇam* is what happened in olden times. *Purō-hithar* means is one who tells in advance what is good (hitham). It will not only be good but pleasing. Usually, what is good to the mind is not to the liking of the mind. That is why Upanishads make a distinction and call as '*śrēyas*' what is good and as '*prēyas*' what is pleasing to the mind. Hitham is telling and doing not only what is good but also pleasing to the mind.

Sometimes we suffer from a boil. Hot water of optimum temperature is poured on it and we feel it is 'hitham'. Sins tie us down to *samsāra* and subject us to suffering. It is also like a boil. To wipe out sin we have to do *punya*. That *punyam* will be like the

medicine which causes burning sensation. Instead, making that too pleasant is what the guru does.

Sathyam is good but usually the mind does not like it. Manu says 'speak the truth also in an agreeable manner' : 'Sathyam brūyāth priyam brūyāth'.

There is a book called '*Hitōpadēśam*'. You must have heard of Panchathanthra stories. If anything good is told people do not usually like it. But *Vishṇu Sarma* wrote a book containing stories in which the animals and birds are characters in a way that even children like it. It is called Panchathanthram. Since this was written by dividing the topics into important five it has that name. Europeans themselves say that this was written in the beginning of the Christian era. A Bengali by name *Nārāyaṇar* wrote several stories conveying morals based on that book in a manner that even young students will like. This is *Hitōpadēśam* written about 800 years back. In olden days there used to be lessons from *Hitōpadēśam* for middle school and from Panchathanthra for high school students studying Sanskrit.

* * *

CULTURE UNDERMINED IN FREE-INDIA

When I say 'in olden days' the reference is to the time of the British when our culture was greatly undermined! Even they had a conscience and here and there they did some good things one of which was keeping Sanskrit as a subject in schools. But after we got freedom small differences that exist here and there are blown up and in the name of regional culture there is the attempt to suppress the culture which covered the whole country. The result is that our own people have outdone the Britishers in undermining our culture. The end of it all is neither the artificially made regional culture nor the culture which covered the whole country is found

in the life of the people and it is fast progressing on the Western model. In the attempt to replace the national culture by regional culture Sanskrit education has been scuttled and whatever little good the British have done in this field is also gone.

I intended to say that making the moral teaching which is *srēyas* likeable (*prēyas*) is *Hitōpadēsam*.

* * *

VIDHYĀ GURU AND DĪKSHĀ GURU

The guru shows in advance the way for what is good for the future. Therefore he becomes *Purōhithar*. He does not stop with teaching the young *brahmachāri* in the gurukulam about how to conduct himself during Brahmacharya *Āśramam*. He gives *upadēsam* which is meant for the entire life. He is called *Vidhyā* Guru. That is he teaches all branches of learning. But he will not immediately teach to the extent that the student can take up *Āthma Vidhyā* for practice. Although he will develop the knowledge of the *śishya* in that and create in him attachment to its goal, since the maturity of *sanyāsam* is required to put them into practice he will send the *śishya* only to the second asram (*gruhassthāśram*). The guru who later gives him *sanyāsam* and *upadēsam* only of Brahma *vidhyā* is called 'Dīkshā Guru'. A guru who gives *Upadēsa* of manthra for doing *pūjā* for particular deities has also come to be called as *Dīkshā* Guru. Whichever type of guru one may be he will protect the *śishya* from going wrong. That is why he is called 'Purōhithar'. Guru is a *purō-hithar* who cures not only the affliction that is already there but gives preventive medicine to ensure that sins do not accrue in the future.

* * *

GURU'S GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

There is a saying which seems to show that distinction between a *purōhitha* and a guru:

Rājānam rāshtrajam pāpam rajapāpam purōhitham

Bharthāram sthī-krutham pāpam; śishya pāpam gurum vrajēth

What is usually thought is that a king rules over the people, the *rājaguru* rules over him, the husband rules over the wife, the guru rules over the *śishya* etc. But in our *Dharma sāsthrās* the responsibility has been given of leading on the right path those very four over whom they seem to rule. The king should guide the people on the right path; the *rājaguru* should guide the king on the right path; the husband has to guide the wife on the right path; the guru has to guide the *śishya* on the right path. Thus they have to shoulder this responsibility compulsorily. The responsibility can be said to be fearful because if they fail to discharge it the sins of the people, the king, the wife and the *śishyas* will affect respectively the king, the *rājaguru*, the husband, and the guru. It is because they have been given this great responsibility the four have been asked to obey those under whose care they are.

* * *

PURŌHITHA AND GURU

The reason why the above *ślōka* is quoted is because a distinction has been made between *purōhit* and guru - the king's *purōhit* and 'śishya's guru'. If that is so, are *purōhitha* and guru different? Guru mentioned here - generally mentioned in many places - is the one under whom one does *gurukulavāsam* and prosecutes his studies in his younger days after his 'upanayanam'. In olden times, he used to live in forest. *Śishyas* used to go to him, live with him and do *Vidhyābhyāsam*. Later, even when he did not live in the forest, he was living separate from the *śishya* in his own gurukulam. Students used to come from other places also. Whether the gurukulam was in the forest or in the country, once their studies were over the boys used to return home, get married and do the *gruhastha karmās*. At that stage some other gurus are

required to conduct those *karmās* for them. Such a guru came to be called '*Purōhithar*'. For several people who are in family life there will be only one *Purōhithar*. But the king had one exclusively for himself. Even the king in his younger days used to go to the gurukulam and do *Vidhyābhyāsam*. As a king he used to send for the guru now and then making available to him the chariot for this purpose and seek his advice. There have been instances where the king had a *purōhit* in the palace for himself only. It is the one who remains in the kingdom and advises the king who has been referred to as *purōhit* in the *ślōka* and others have been distinguished as gurus.

Therefore a *purōhit* also is a guru - he too does the duty of showing the right way but he is for a particular function within a limit.

These days we do not go to a *purōhit* for *Vidhyābhyāsam*. The *purōhits* of present days are those who conduct rituals and ceremonies. In the olden times those who completed their studies in gurukulam and entered *gruhassthāśramam* were also taught by the guru to perform *Vēdha karmās* - starting from small ishti to big yajnas. But now we depend upon the *purōhit* for performing even small and routine rituals and ceremonies. He is today having the status of a guru to some extent. Since at least he is there for us to do the rituals through an *āchāryā*, he has a status. He visits the home and tells the people in advance about annual ceremonies, festivities in which special vratha or *pūjās* are to be performed etc.

It is heard that these days some of the *purōhits* 'adjust' themselves to the wishes of the people and help them in doing *karmās* in a way contrary to *sāsthrās*. In olden days the *purōhit* told only what are really good and said it in a pleasing manner. He did not stop with telling but persuaded the *śishyas* to do things as told by him. Only if he has that power the status of a guru will be appropriate to him.

ŚISHYA'S EFFORT AND THE GURU'S GRACE

But what is said above does not mean that a guru will make the *śishya* do all that he has told him hundred percent. Here allowance has got to be given to the state of maturity of the *anthahkaraṇas* of the individuals. The *śishya*'s maturity of mind and sharpness of intellect have a special place in his ability to receive the *Vidhyā*. Along with that he must have humility. It is only in the case of a *śishya* who is extremely humble and makes total surrender that guru's persuasion gives him full *jnāna* even if he is not sharp in intellect. It can be said that the power of guru's grace does not leave much for the *śishya*'s effort but fills him with complete *jnāna*. That is only by exception.

A look into Upanishad (*Chāndōgyam* VIII-7) will show this. *Prājapathi* gave *upadēśam* to *Virōchana*, the king of the asuras and also to Indra the *Dēvarājā*. But *Virōchana* stopped with the knowledge that the body is the *āthmā*. Only Indra realized the true nature of the *āthmā* that it is eternal. The reason is that the *vidhyā* taught by a guru will be absorbed by the *śishya* only to the extent that he opens his *anthahkaraṇa* with humility.

The nature of a *śishya* is also important in receiving and absorbing the *vidhyā*. In fact *Bhavabhūthi* says in a little extreme manner that that alone is what matters.

*Vitharathi guruh prājñē Vidhyām yathaiva thathā jatē
Na thu kalu thayōr jñānē śakthim karōth yapahanthi vā
Bhavathi cha thayōr bhūyān bhēdhah phalam prathi thadh yathā
Prabhavathi śuchir bhimbha grāhē mañir na mrudhām chayah*

There is a student who is highly intelligent. He is referred to as '*Prājña*' in the *ślōka*. *Prājña* does not merely mean being intelligent but being with matured mind and the humility appropriate to him. The guru teaches him. The guru also teaches the dull-witted student (*jadam*). He is *jadam* in obedience also. The

guru teaches to both in the same manner. This is what the first line of the *ślōka* means.

What he says in the next line is what I have described as being extreme. 'Na thu kalu thayōr jnānē śakthim karōthi apahanthi vā' - The guru does not either add to the intelligence - the intelligence that is natural to the *śishya* - nor does he take away the power of that intelligence. This gives the impression that a *śishya* being able to absorb a *vidhyā* depends entirely on his intelligence. I feel like saying that this is extreme view. The person who said this is very great, a great poet, who knew *āthma sāsthā*, *nīthi sāsthā* etc. Still it is usual for a poet to lay emphasis on a particular aspect with which he is dealing at a particular time.

The *ślōka* comes in the drama, *Uththararāma Charitham*. When Lava-Kucha had *Vidhyābhyāsam* under Valmiki there was with them a co-student by name *Āthrēyī*. She says this *ślōka* when leaving *Valmiki's Āśramam* to go to *Agasthyā* for learning. She felt 'Lava - Kucha were able to absorb the lessons fully. They have the intellectual capability (*prājna*) and the capacity to remember and retain what they learnt (*mēdhā*). With my poor *prājna* and *mēdhā* I have not been able to cope up along with them. Therefore I am leaving this *āśram* and going to *Agasthyā* for learning'. In that context the poet had to make her speak like that to bring out clearly the greatness of Lava-Kucha and her own poor ability. Therefore instead of showing what was the part of the guru Valmiki - without bringing here the fact that the guru's grace has the power to give a path and increase the understanding of the *śishya* - he has placed emphasis on the view that the quality of *Vidhyābhyāsam* depended upon the quality of *śishyas* to achieve this objective.

* * *

THE NEXT LINE

Bhāvathi cha thayōr bhūyān bhēdhah

phalam prathi thadh yathā

Although the guru teaches all the *śishyas* in the same manner if we look at the result we find a lot of difference between the *śishya* who is a *prājña* and one who is jada. Bhedha phalam means differing results. Then the poet goes to the fourth line and gives a comparison.

There is an object which is reflected by certain things - produce prathi bhimbham. But do all things produce prathi bhimbham? No. Only those things which have a very smooth and glossy surface reflect. The quality of the reflected image depends upon the degree of smoothness of the reflecting surface. It is a clear mirror that produces a true reflection. In *Bhavabhūthi*'s time it was '*suddha spatikam*' which served the purpose of a mirror. That is a kind of gem. In the *dhyāna śloka* of *Saraswathi* we find the words '*thōrbhiryukthā spatikamañi mayīm akshamālām thathānā*'. It is the pure *spatikamañi* which is referred to as *Śūsirmañi*.

'Bhimbha grahē' means in absorbing the object - that is receiving the object within and reflecting it. He takes two different media for comparison. One is the *Śūsirmañi*, the other is a lump of clay (what is referred to at the end of the *śloka* as *mruthām sayah*). Can a lump of clay reflect any object? It has no power to absorb.

A small gem is able to reflect a big object. But clay even when it is a heap (*chayah* means a heap) cannot reflect any object.

'Lava-Kucha though young in age absorb the great truths taught by Valmiki (like the *mañi* that absorbs an object). Though I am older than them in age, the truth has not registered in my brain which is like clay'. Thus she speaks about the two *śishyas* and about herself but nothing about the power of the guru to prod.

The fact is that although the *śishya*'s own maturity and the effort are very important the guru also helps to prod so that what he teaches gets absorbed and ensures that he follows the teaching in his life. The guru may also go with him as companion.

It is true that a lump of clay will not reflect any object. Even if the sun shines very brightly the clay cannot reflect. But suppose we are in a dark room. Opposite to us there is a mud wall which is facing the sunlight. A mud wall is actually clay that is spread out. When sunlight falls on the mud wall the dark room in which we are also gets some reflected light from the mud wall. Even opaque objects when held before sunlight or any other bright light at a particular angle do reflect some light.

The sun penetrates his form into a medium and makes that medium spread his brightness. In another medium he does not penetrate but spreads the light on its surface and makes the thing reflect the brightness to some extent. Thus a guru who is endowed with great *jñāna* even if the *śishya* is dull-headed will see to it that he too gets a little of the light of the *jñāna* and spread it to others. If the *śishya* is of great merit the guru will pass on his entire *jñāna*, qualities and powers to him.

* * *

GURU WHO RAISES THE SISHYA TO HIS OWN LEVEL

In the case of the gem it only reflects an object. It does not become the original object. But guru-*śishya* relationship goes a step higher. How will it be if the gem itself becomes the object which it reflects? In the same manner, the *śishya* will attain identity with the guru in all respects. Just as the guru has raised him to his (guru's) level the *śishya* too in times to come will raise his *śishya* to his own level.

What we have seen with reference to the sun and spatika *maṇi* our *Āchāryā* talks giving comparison of the philosopher's stone and metal.

*Dhrushtānthō naiva dhrushta sthribhuvana jatare
sadhgurōr jnānadhāthuh*

*Sparsachchēth thathra kalpyah sa nayathi
yadhahō swarnathām aśmasāram*

*Na sparsam thathā(a)pi sritha charaṇa yugē
sadhguruh svīya śishyē*

Svīyam sāmyam vidhaththē nirupama sthēna va(a)loukikō(a)pi

Right in the beginning *Āchāryā* says that no comparison can be found for the guru. He says we cannot find it anywhere in the three worlds. When ending the *ślōka* also he says 'Nirupama' that is incomparable. Any object of comparison can be found if at all only in the three worlds. But he says the matter concerning the guru is beyond the three worlds. He says it is 'a-loukika'.

Usually a comparison used to be made by way of praising the guru. There is a wonderful gem called '*sparsa maṇi*'. Any metal which comes in contact with it even if it be iron will become gold. In the same way it is said by his association with the guru even the *śishya* who is covered by the darkness of ignorance shines brightly like molten gold. But *Āchāryā* says that even that comparison is inadequate. It is true that the *sparsa maṇi* has the quality to make iron into gold. The second line '*asma saram swarnātham nayathi*' means 'it gives the quality of gold even to iron. Asma *saram* means iron. Asmam means stone. In poetic tradition it is said that 'vajram' comes from a fully ripe tree and iron gets formed as the concentrated essence of stone. The asma *saram* becomes gold. The *sparsamaṇi* gives it only the quality of gold. Na *sparsathvam* - it does not transform iron into another *sparsa maṇi*. But the guru? Sadhguru?

Sadhguru svīya śishyē svīyam sāmyam vidhaththē

Svīya sishyē : *Svīya* means ones own. He gives such a *śishya* the quality by which the *śishya* becomes he (the guru) himself.

This happens only in the case of an extremely deserving *śishya*. As a rare exception just to show that there is no limit to his power of grace even an undeserving *śishya* who is like iron is redeemed and raised to the highest level. What happens generally is that a guru has the characteristics essential for a guru, the *śishya* too has the characteristics essential for a *śishya*, the guru teaches him whole-heartedly and the *śishya* learns it whole-heartedly. He makes all possible efforts. The guru too prods him, passes into him his own experience by the power of his grace and the *śishya* attains the goal.

* * *

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A ŚISHYA AND THE COMPASSION OF THE GURU

It is seen in *Chāndōgyam* that even if the whole world is given as *dakṣiṇai Vidhyādhānam* cannot be made to one who is undeserving because *vidhyā* is higher than this world. For one who is deserving and qualified to receive the word used in Upanishad is *Prañayyan*. It means that he is of right conduct and is straightforward. It also means one who is loveable. Here, *Āchāryā* says that the eldest son is *Priyārhan* - one who deserves to be loved and the *Prañayyan* is honest. Only if the son too is honest, he will be qualified to be the recipient of the love of the father who gives him *upadēsam* of *Vidhyā*. In the same manner, it is only the *śishya* who is honest who will deserve the total love of the guru. To deserve it is the *śishya*'s characteristic and love and grace the characteristics of the guru. It is only when both combine the *śishya* achieves the goal.

Thus it is not that the *śishya* alone by himself is able to attain siddhi. In one of his original works - *Thath - Thvōpadēsam* - *Āchāryā* has said conclusively :

Sri Gurōh karuṇām vinā : 'Without the compassion of the Sadhguru there cannot be his grace'. What he says is that 'however much learned one may be he cannot gain knowledge of the soul'.

In that work *Āchāryā* deals with such questions as what is *Brahmam*, what is *Jīva*, how is it that the Upanishad says that both are same. After enquiring into these aspects he says 'Even though it is true that the soul is self-effulgent, even if we understand at the intellectual level what the Upanishad *Mahā vākya* says that our thinking that *Brahmam* is somewhere and we are *jīvās* different from it is not so.....'.

For understanding this, knowledge gained through books is enough. That is how many people have understood these days. It is seen from what *Āchāryā* says that even in his time there were some who were like this. Not only that it is seen from his reference to such people in the words of the Upanishad that they were there even before his time. Those who have gained the bookish knowledge that they and the *Brahmam* are same only if they go far above that level they can experience it. Can anyone go like that by himself? Unless there is guru's help and his grace it is not possible. It is here that *Āchāryā* says '*Sri Gurōh karuṇām vinā*'. However much one may read and tax the brain that *Thathāpi Sakyathē naiva* - however much one may do he will not get the qualification. Qualification for what? - to realize as inner experience the truth of *Jīva-Brahma* identity which has been understood only at the intellectual level - '*aparōkshayithum*'.

* * *

THE SPURIOUS PUNDITS EXPOSED BY THE UPANISHADS AND ŚANKARA

But these days many people who have gained intellectual understanding that *jīvāthmā* - *Paramāthmā* are same by reading

books say that it is not necessary to know this through a guru. Mostly such people develop the pride of learning (*Vidhyā garvam*) that they have known some big truth. It is only if such pride is completely destroyed the *āthmā* can be experienced. But in the case of these people the truth that has been realized intellectually does not go to the heart and become the experience. But such people are intelligent. They will never accept defeat. They will show as if they have gained the experience of the Self. We see lot of people who say that there is no need to have *upadēśam* from a guru, but they themselves give *upadēśam* to all others showing the 'chin-mudra'.

Not that such people were not there in *Āchāryā's* time and even earlier in the days of Upanishad. Both *Katōpanishad* and *Muṇḍakōpanishad* describe them in identical manner. There is difference in just one word. *Āchāryā's* *bāshyam* is 'Vēshtyamānāh' - 'They are in fact enveloped in the darkness of *ajnāna*, wrapped in ignorance. Yet they praised themselves as being 'dhīras', scholars and great.

We use the word 'dhīra' to mean a person of bravery, valour. While this is correct, in the *sāsthrās* like Upanishad when the *siddhās* and those who are achievers in Brahma *Vidhyā* are referred to as 'dhīra', it means intellectual ability of a high order. Those endowed with that quality are referred to as *dhīras*. It very nearly means a *jnāni*. In *Gītā* also while saying that the *jnāni* is not under the delusion that with the death of the body everything ends, *Bhagawān* says 'Dhīrasthathra na muhyathi' (II. 13).

Those who have not gained real *jnāna* (those with mere intellectual ability) show themselves to be *dhīra* and also scholars.

What purpose is served by their making such claims? In several ways, they are just wavering. It is here that the two Upanishads have used different words. There are several words

which by their very sound denote the meaning. In English they call it 'onomatopoeia'. (In Sanskrit it is 'Śabhdhānukaraṇam'). To convey that those who call themselves scholars will really go in uncertain ways and struggle one Upanishad has used the word 'Thanthramyamānāh' and the other has used the word 'Jankanyamānāh'. Here Āchāryā says in his *bāshyam* 'although they speak a lot of theoretical *Vēdhānthā* in practice they will go on the crooked path which involves disease, old age and death and go waste'.

The Upanishad also says that they do not have any particular goal and are going round and round with intellectual arguments. When one keeps going round and round, he will feel giddy. Āchāryā describes this state of theirs as 'Vipramandhi'.

True guru is only one who takes the *śishya* to the goal. The spurious scholars who are not guru go round and round without a goal. Those before them who had acted like this have the 'status of their guru'. We see even today those who point to persons who had acted contrary to *sāsthrās* in olden times and proudly claim that they are also independent like them. The Bible compares this to the blind leading the blind and says that both of them fall into the pit.

Upanishad has also said indirectly that those blind people who now follow will be taken as providing the lead and in future there will be a crowd of blind people and there will be a lineage. Just as there is the guru *paramparā* those who say that guru is not required will themselves become spurious gurus and will create a lineage. A title that the Upanishad and Āchāryā give to those who show themselves to be great intellectuals is that they are 'mūdā'. This is not said out of anger but the truth is stated as it is.

Further our Āchāryā refers to those of his time who were like the theoretical Vēdānthīs of these days who said 'If we think with a pure mind, Brahma Jnānam which is the import of the Mahā Vākya can be realized. Where is the need for a guru?'

*Anthahkaraṇa samsuddhou swayam Jnānam prakāśathe
Vēdha vākyaih athahkim syāth gurunā?*

Having stated that question like this he gave his answer as
'*Ithi na sāmpradham*' and completes the *ślōka* :

Vēdha vakyaiah-rathah kim syāth gurunēthi na sāmpradham

Ithi : saying like this, that is what the spurious pundits say.

Na sāmpradham : Not proper.

Sāmpradham means what is proper.

Why is it not proper? Because the authority for us is only the *Vēdhā*. What *Vēdhās* say is our path. *Āchāryā* has pointed out in that book that '*Vēdhā* through Upanishad has said that only the one who has a guru realizes the truth'.

But those spurious pundits will say 'Why should the *Vēdhās* be the authority? Our buddhi and our conscience are the authority'. It is not known how to counter them in their own rational way and convince them.

For *Āchāryā Vēdhās* are important; that is his life breath. At one place in his *bāshyam* he has said with great bhakthi to *Vēdhās* and the compassion of *Vēdha Māthā* '*māthru pithru sahasrēbyōpi hithaishinā Vēdhā*' - *Vēdhās* do more good than a thousand fathers and mothers. He always emphasizes the *Upadēsa* through a guru which the *Vēdhās* lay down.

* * *

THE AUTHORITY OF VĒDHĀS; OTHER RELIGIONS

To those who ask : 'Why should we accept that the *Vēdhās* are the authority and not our own buddhi?' my only answer is : 'Is it not true that it is only from among those who believe that the *Vēdhās* are the authority and not their own buddhi that great personages (*mahān*) those who had great spiritual experience had

appeared in a line as a chain right from ancient times and to this day? We are unable to find this feature in any other religion. Although it looked as if one or two persons who had rejected the authority of the *Vēdhās* had become great as individuals, *Āchāryā* has established that their philosophy is not correct due to which such religions have either gone out of this country or have become extremely weak. With the passage of time, such religions had taken several aspects from the *Vēdhic* religion and lost their original form whether in this country or abroad. Those originators of such religions (*mūla purushā*) who had said 'one's own buddhi is the authority and not any book or *upadēsam* or guru' have themselves been adopted as gurus by their followers and have written books containing the rules of their religion which cannot be questioned! Whichever religion it may be it has a basic scripture which has to be followed. It is like a State having a Constitution. Because even those religionists who question the authority of the *Vēdhās* keep for themselves their own scriptures as authority which they follow there is a community of such religionists.

Thus other religionists also make their buddhi subordinate to such an authority and with humility and faith accept the principles and philosophies preached by those whom they consider great. It is that which makes some of them great personages (*mahāns*) by giving them a great experience and has enabled that religion to survive.

Yet it can be proved even with statistics that in no other religion have there been such a large number of *jnānis*, *yōgis* - *siddhās* of *Rāja yōga*, *siddhās* of *Manthra yōga*, great bhakthas who had the experience - all these through bhakthi only. It is in this religion that countless literature on metaphysics etc has appeared. Several *sāadhanā mārḡās* which are subtle and which can guide different types of people have appeared and survived here till this day. All these have been raised on the foundation of the

authority of the *Vēdhās*. What more is required for us to accept that authority whole-heartedly and follow it with humility?

* * *

ŚRADDHĀ (FAITH) IN VĒDHĀS AND THE GURU

Earlier I had said that subordinating the buddhi to something and accepting it with faith will itself give the highest experience. This is conveyed by the simple word '*śraddhā*'. If we have faith in *Vēdhās*, the *Dharma sāsthrās* which flow from the *Vēdhās* and the *āchāryās* who expound them that alone will be enough.

It is only with the aid of buddhi we know everything of the external world. But it is the same buddhi which acts as an obstruction to our understanding the great truth of the inner world. This is how *Ambāl* has designed it. Although She tests like this She also sends *mahāns* and *āchāryās* who will give the advice : 'your buddhi does not have the authority to enter into the inner world and know the truth. It is in the *Vēdhās* which *Īswara* Himself has given and which has come to us through the rishis. Therefore make the buddhi (which obstructs the passage to the inner world) lie low and get hold of *sāsthrās*' and turn them on the right path.

* * *

SURRENDER (ŚARANĀGATHI)

Making the buddhi lie low is *Śaranāgathi*. It is to signify it *namaskāram* has been laid down as a symbolic physical act. When we talk of buddhi we relate it to the brain which is in the head. When we perform *namaskāram* we make the head (which contains the brain) touch the ground. The physical act of *namaskāram* symbolizes *Śaranāgathi* to *Īswara* who is the ultimate truth expounded by the *Vēdhās*.

Here buddhi has no function. In its place there is *śraddhā*-faith. Just as we are sure that it is hot when there is a flame and it is

cold when there is chill breeze, we should be sure that in matters related to the other world, the spiritual world, what the *Vēdhās* say is the truth (*sathyam*). This is called *śraddhā*. The total obedience, surrender, to which the *śraddhā* takes us is called *saranāgathi*. There is no room for any questions there, no work for buddhi.

* * *

VĒDHĀS - ŚĀSTHRĀS TO BE LEARNT ONLY THROUGH A GURU AMBĀL'S STRANGE PLAN

When it is said that *śraddhā* means the firm faith with which what the *Vēdhās* say is accepted, it should not be thought 'we can ourselves learn the *Vēdhās*, the *śāsthrās* which flow from them, the *vidhyā* and the various spiritual practices (*sāadhanā mārga*)' because that *Vēdhā* itself says in *Chāndōgya* Upanishad 'you do not do anything like that by yourself. Only if you learn it from a guru as *upadēsam* you will understand it. *Māṇḍūkyaōpanishad* says 'Seek a guru and follow him. You do not know the inner world. There is a guru who knows it. Through him you also learn' - this is what the *Rig samhithā* says. In *Chāndōgyam* through the words of *Sathyakāma Jāpālar* to his guru it is said that it is only the *Vidhyā* that is learnt from an *āchāryā* that gives the best fruits.

Vēdhās do not end with what is read and understood by the brain. The aksharas of the *Vēdhās* contain powers of giving great experience. That power will not become explicit by someone studying it by himself and reciting it.

Religion is there for experiencing God. If *Vēdhā* is the book of the religion, how to obtain a divine power hidden in it? Even when *Parāśakthi* blessed the rishis to absorb the *Vēdha vākyas* from *ākāśa*, she had made a plan. It is a plan which provided room for other religions which will be the offshoots of the *Vēdhic* religion. 'Let those who read the religious books of other religions,

let them be benefited by it and obtain a little divine power. In *Vēdhic* religion except in the case of *Vēdha manthrās* and thanthras those like *sthōthrās*, methods of worship etc which are for all people - let them follow them on their own. But so far as *Vēdha manthrās* are concerned no one was to be allowed to learn them on his own. *Ambāl*'s plan is that if one has to receive this very big thing he must reduce himself and become very small.

A man thinks that buddhi is the biggest thing which he has. He is proud of it. It appears that *Ambāl* wanted to show that only if he sacrifices it (the buddhi) and makes himself humble he can obtain the benefits of *Vēdhās*. It is not only in the case of *Vēdhās* but even in regard to day-to-day affairs of the world instead of knowing a thing ourselves if we learn it from someone who has already known it and has experience in it, it gives more benefit.

Particular mention must be made of *Yōga sāsthrā*. I refer not only to the *Ashtānga Yōga* of Pathanjali but all *Yōga sāsthrās*. These days there is talk of *yōga* everywhere. This gives rise to the fear that things may go wrong somewhere. It should not be forgotten that these *yōgas* have to be learned from an experienced guru and under his constant attention. If it is not done in this manner, things may go wrong very much both physically and mentally. Any *mārga* laid down by *sāsthrā* if not learnt through a guru, the result will be bad. In the case of *yōga*, it will be terribly bad.

* * *

COMMON SIMPLE WAY OF WORSHIP AND PRAYERS THROUGH STHŌTHRĀS

Generally all people must have the thought of God. If a human being is to deserve that name he must think of the Lord who gave him the life force and live according to the way shown by his

grace. If we are to think of the Lord ourselves we will not think anything worthwhile with our wavering mind. Apart from this what do we know about the Lord? Here the *sthōthrās* - not only in Sanskrit but in all languages - sung by the great men who have known God are of great help. Since many who have experienced the Lord have repeated the *sthōthrās* over a long period their divine power would have increased. Reciting them will take our mind to the Lord.

It is the great fortune of our country that such *sthōthrās* regarding every deity are there without number. These can be read and recited by all people. There is no condition that these have to be learnt through a guru. It is of course preferable if a guru who has had spiritual experience teaches the same. But there is no such rule.

Before reciting any *sthōthrā* at least one *ślōka* has to be recited about *Vignēśwara* and then any general prayer to a guru should be recited thinking of the great persons whom we consider guru and then only the *sthōthram* should be repeated.

Since all of us know that the Lord is immensely powerful and very great there is nothing special about our standing before him as small persons. But by standing like that we will not develop simplicity and humility. Only if we stand in humility before someone who is like us in human form but who is great and is full of divinity it is special. Then only we can gain the wealth of humility. There is nothing like that which gives happiness and contentment in life. Therefore everyone should earn this wealth. Since paying obeisance to guru (guru vandana) is the way for it, even when praying to God guru vandana is first recited. This has humility on the one hand and self-confidence on the other. The self-confidence is because we feel encouraged to see that someone who was born like us humans has evolved so much as to be considered God. There are several *ślōkas* and songs which are

applicable to any guru and which are popular. There is a *ślōka* which describes guru as being of the form of all *dēvathās* :

*Gurur Brahmā Gurur Viṣṇuḥ Gurur Dēvō Mahēśwarah
Gurus sākshāth Parabrahmāh thasmai Sri Guravē Namah*

Here too there is need for caution. Some *sthōthrās* by themselves have manthra *sakthi*. There are some like *Lalithā Sahasranāmam*, *Lalithā Thrisathī* etc which are very powerful. It is advisable to learn such *sthōthrās* from a guru. We have to hear it from an eminent person three times or at least once and then we should start reciting it. There is one more aspect in *Lalithā Thrisathī*. It is only after receiving *upadēsam* of a particular 'mūla manthra' of *Ambāl* in the proper manner, this *sthōthrā* should be learned.

If a *mahān* commands that certain *sthōthrās* which have manthra *sakthi* are to be recited that command should be taken as *upadēsa* from a guru and should be followed. But generally, there is scope for the *sthōthrās* to be recited on our own.

The same applies to *pūjā* at home on a small scale. After doing guru *dhyāna*, everyone can start doing *pūjā*. It is important that such *pūjās* should not involve manthra and thanthra. Even if it involves a little manthra and thanthra it is absolutely essential that it must be learned as a *upadēsa* from a guru. Even in cases of *pūjā* not involving manthra and thanthra it would be preferable if some elderly person or the *purōhith* of the house makes a beginning and then we do the *pūjā* with the attitude that he is guru and we are *śishya*.

My thinking runs along two lines. On one side looking to the status accorded to the guru in our religious traditions and the fact that these days there is a tendency for people not to accord respect to elders but do things as they like, I feel that I should emphasise the need for a guru wherever possible. On the other hand, I also

feel that in this world of countless people if emphasis is placed on the need for individual guru for the *pūjā* of each one, reciting of *sthōthrā* etc also will not be done. That is why I have been advocating a compromise.

Normally, it is not permissible for persons like me who are in a *Dharma Pītam* to say anything by way of relaxing what is said in *Dharma sāsthrā*. Because if we dilute it the *śishyas* will dilute it further and the rules of *sāsthrās* will evaporate. Apart from this each *Dharma Pītam* will relax somewhere and nothing will be left to follow. Therefore we are required to tell what is in the *mūla sāsthrās* as a must. That is what I too try to do. Many people feel sorry that I am too conservative! When I say 'Sorry' it might be really anger. If there are those who show their sorrow there will be many times more who will be feeling that way. They must be nursing the grievance: 'Without understanding the times and our problems, he goes on talking about things of the olden days'. For me it is 'dharma sankatam'. Still I do not mind being branded as 'conservative' in the thought 'in any case people will give up doing what they cannot do. Why should I permit it through my words? If I do it I may be destroying the thought of those who may be wanting to do things according to *sāsthrās* with change of circumstances.

Still I tell certain things for which there appears to be room in the *sāsthrās* - even such things about which I have to think whether those who stick to *sampradhāya* will accept. That is why I have said certain things for which a guru is not a must.

But one thing can be done. There is such a provision in the *sāsthrās* as '*āphath dharma*' (dharma to be followed in times of danger). It is relaxing the rules during times of danger. We can call the present period as a dangerous period in which the Kali Purusha has pushed the whole world into the danger of materialism.

Therefore what I am now telling which looks like relaxation can be taken as '*āphath dharma*'.

Ashtothra *Nāmāvali* can be learnt and *archanā* can be done. But in some *ashtōthram* there will be '*Bhijāksharams*' which are aksharas of manthra *Śāsthrā*. These have to be learnt from a guru.

Anything that is learnt through a guru has greater value even where it is not compulsory. I said about '*āphath dharma*'. But once the *āphath* (danger) is gone instead of diluting the rules further, we should start doing according to *śāsthrās*. There is such a thing as '*āphath sanyāsam*'. Supposing one is nearing his end and he feels that if he takes *sanyāsa* before death that will be good for him, is it possible to have the services of a guru at such a time and take *sanyāsam* according to the normal rule? Noting that it is not possible, *śāsthrām*, with great compassion, has laid down a simple ritual by which the person can take *sanyāsam* himself. But supposing he comes out of the crisis and recovers then he has to approach a guru and take *sanyāsam* through him in the proper way. In the same manner it will be better if even in cases where the *śāsthrās* permit *upāsana*s to be undertaken on our own they are learnt through a guru later.

The palatable medicine that is specially meant for this Kali age is '*pārāyaṇām*' of the Lord's names and bhajans. This can be done by all people themselves. Without adding '*Praṇava*' and '*Namah*' any name like *Siva*, *Rama*, *Nārāyaṇā*, *Gōvindhā* can be repeated as *japā*. Here too, a short guru *dhyāna* is good. If one who has realized God by repeating the *nāma* is thought of as guru and then *dhyāna* done it will be both humility and a tonic. Even a *nāma* if received as *upadēsam* in the proper way it is good. If that is not convenient, the *nāma japā* need not be postponed. Later when it is convenient if *upadēsam* is taken from an elder, it will be good.

* * *

THE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE : EVEN IF AN EXCLUSIVE GURU IS NOT THERE, A COMMON GURU IS NECESSARY

All people should think of God for which there will be more and more *pūjā* and bhajan etc among them. At the same time only if humility is developed one can escape destruction due to ego and save the soul. Everyone should give the status of a guru to someone and show devotion to him.

For this all the crores and crores of people must have guru. But will it be possible to get so many gurus to take care of such a large number of people particularly in these days when people have the tendency to question everyone? It is difficult. Even if there are people who deserve to be called a guru, people should realize their merit and go to them with humility. Will that be possible for all the crores and crores of people?

But in today's society everyone considers someone as great, a *mahān*, a divine personage. Although the present yuga has gained the name that it is one of disbelief, a lot of people go in crowds to those who are believed to be *mahān*. Although many people go to several *mahāns* each one will have attachment only to one of them.

Those great people give *upadēsam* both on matters concerning God and the right way to live the day-to-day life. The bhakthi that people show to them will be true only if their going to the great persons does not end with finding solutions for their problems and ways to gain whatever they desire. Most people will to some extent follow the ways of the great persons to whom they go. At least they will have the thought or make effort to follow the great person. In such circumstances, the people become *sishtyas* and the great persons to whom they go become guru.

If one is having a large following it is not possible to have direct contact with each of them and give *upadēsam* in the manner laid down. Yet, do they not give their *upadēsam* in the general

way? If the bhakthas think that they will follow that *upadēsam* in their life then only they become real 'followers'. When they follow the great person, it would amount to each of them having got a guru.

For example, I am here and there are other *Swāmīs* like me. We have the title 'Jagadguru'. Because of this do we give *upadēsam* to each one individually? Is it possible? We take it that all people belong to us and tell them whatever our original gurus (*mūla purushā*) have given *upadēsam* of matters divine and dharma necessary for day-to-day life. Although many among the people have not received from us *upadēsam* individually they all belong to the world of *śishyas* which has accepted us as guru.

The guru vandana to be recited before commencing *pārāyaṇa*, *pūjā*, bhajan etc should be about such persons who have been accepted as *mahān* and guru.

One who wrote the *pārāyaṇa*, one who laid down the method of *pūjā* (*pūjā kalpam*) one who initiated the bhajan tradition should all be treated as guru and obeisance offered to them. Even when their identity is not known we have to say 'Namaskāram to whoever it may be'.

On the whole there are simple *upāsana*s for which it is not necessary to receive *upadēsam* from a guru. These are such that they can be done by people who are running about their jobs and are in such remote and secluded places where there is no possibility of finding a guru. If such simple *upāsana*s are given up there is no way for people of today's world to have spiritual advancement. Therefore if most of the people take to such *upāsana*s there is nothing wrong in it.

Even then guru bhakthi which is the root for the huge tree of '*sanāthana dharma*' should not be given up and therefore even if a guru is not there individually for everyone, one who shows the

right way must be mediated upon before doing *upāsanā*. I am saying this because it is only the worship of guru (guru *upāsanā*) which helps the growth of humility and self-confidence.

* * *

HUMILITY AND ŚRADDHĀ

Modesty is humility. Faith is *śraddhā*. These two are like our two eyes. We have seen that guru is one who shows the way and we should follow that path. We can follow a way only if we have eyes. Humility and faith are our two eyes. If we have one of these the other will come automatically. If we are submissive to something we do so only in the faith that it will do us good. Similarly, if we have the firm faith that a thing will do us good, we will be submissive to it in order to get benefit from it.

In *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* has talked of *vināyam* (humility) and *śraddhā*. First he mentions *Pranīpātham* which is offering obeisance, then *Paripraśnam* which is questioning and knowing and then *Sēwā* as the characteristics of a *śishya*. Serving the guru is the way to help him. Then he says '*Śraddhāvān labhathē Jnānam*' (IV.39) (only the one who has *śraddhā* acquires *jnāna*). *Pranīpātham*, *Paripraśna* and *Sēwā* fall under humility. It is clear that *Pranīpātham* (*Namaskāram*) and *Sēwā* indicate humility. A question may arise as how *Paripraśnam* can be indicative of humility.

Paripraśnam is repeated questioning in several ways. 'It is only when one is not sure of what the guru says he will ask repeatedly. Therefore, does this not amount to having doubt not only in what the guru tells but in the guru himself?' - such a thought may arise. It is here that *Bhagawān* says that the one who keeps doubting perishes : '*Samsayāthmā vinaśyathi*' (IV.40). If there is *śraddhā*, humility and *saraṇāgathi*, doubt will not arise in

what the guru says. Therefore, questions also will not arise. Only a person who has doubts will raise questions. Doing like this contrary to the characteristics of a *śishya* - how can this be called humility?

That is not how it should be understood. *Bhagawān* himself has mentioned *Paripraśnam* in between *Pranīpātham* and *Sēwā* and he also says '*Samśayāthmā vinaśyathi*'. Therefore it is clear that repeated questioning from different angles, *Paripraśnam*, is not '*samśayam*'. *Paripraśnam* is to be understood this way : it is not questioning in the manner of cornering the guru. Only such questioning will mean doubting him. The *śishya* is sure in his mind that what the guru says is correct. But he tries to make himself sure that he has correctly understood and therefore asks the guru even if the guru were to think that the question is absurd. He feels that there is nothing below dignity in his asking the guru in order to make himself more clear. That is *Paripraśnam*.

There is a machine. We see it functioning. We have no doubt that it is functioning. But we do not know how it works. But if there is nearby the person who operates it or who has sold it we have no doubt that he knows how the machine works. Therefore we ask him. He explains it, but do we understand everything he tells? We are unable to grasp certain points in which case we need to ask him. That is *Paripraśnam*. By such *Paripraśnam* it will not mean that we have doubt about that person or what he explained. We only test ourselves to see if we have understood it well and then seek clarifications. That is *Paripraśnam*. There is no doubt that such *Paripraśnam* comes under humility.

* * *

THE GREATNESS OF ŚRADDHĀ AS SHOWN BY ĀCHĀRYĀ

Thus after mentioning *Pranīpātham* - *Paripraśnam* - *Sēwā* which are aspects of humility, *Bhagawān* praises another which is

like the *śishya*'s other eye, that is *śraddhā* - '*Śraddhāwān labathe Jnānam*'. At this place, *Āchāryā* in his *bāshyam* has mentioned a subtle psychological point.

Āchāryā says that what *Bhagawān* said first namely *namaskāram* etc are external. When something is seen externally like this, there is room to think 'it is enough if it is clearly seen externally'. It does not matter if within ourselves we do not have that attitude'. With such a thought we may do repeated *namaskārams* without bhakthi in the mind. Without having real interest in the subject we may make a show of having interest and ask some questions; without convergence of the physical act and the mind we may make a big show and get a good name. Although that *namaskāram* etc are to fall under humility how will it really be so? Therefore there is the other eye - *śraddhā*. That unassailable faith is not an external thing. That is within us. There is nothing in it to pretend for the sake of others. Thus *Āchāryā* has beautifully distinguished *śraddhā* and spoken. That is why *Bhagawān* has said emphatically 'it is the one who has *śraddhā* who attains *jnāna*'.

* * *

SARANĀGATHI FLOWS FROM ŚRADDHĀ

When *śraddhā* is perfected total surrender to guru follows. When that happens there will be no need for the guru to give him *Upadēśa* through word of mouth and for the *śishya* to absorb it and to question to make sure whether he has clearly understood it. The guru passes his own total experience into the *śishya*. If the guru gives *upadēśam* even at that stage, it is only to enable him to teach others. It is that kind of surrender which has been laid down by *sāsthrās* as most important. It is said that a woman's surrender to her pathi and a man's surrender to the guru are the means to *mōksha* (*mōksha sādhanam*).

* * *

TWO KINDS OF SURRENDER AND GURU-ŚISHYA RELATIONSHIP

Śaraṇāgathi is said to be of two kinds. They are explained by 'Markataka *kiśōra nyāyam*' 'Mārjāra *kiśōra nyāyam*'. Markataka *kiśōra* is young one of a monkey. *Mārjāra kiśōra* is the young one of a cat. Among the monkeys it is the young one that holds the mother monkey tightly. Markataka *kiśōra nyāyam* is that in the same manner the bhaktha has to catch hold of the guru.

But the kitten just lie down without any worry about protecting themselves. It is the mother cat which picks up the little one by its mouth and moves it from place to place for safety. Therefore *Mārjāra kiśōra nyāyam* is not to make any effort but to remain in the thought 'let god take care'. We do not now get into the argument about which of these two is better. Each one can adopt what he likes.

These two *nyāyams* have been mentioned in the context of the relationship between *Bhagawān*-bhaktha pairs. If we apply this to the Guru-*śishya* pair, I like to mention one thing. The *śishya* has first go to the guru and get hold of him. This is because he needs the guru more than the guru needs him. Therefore according to the *Markataka Nyāyam* he has to hold on to the guru. If he does that the guru will start acting according to the *Mārjāra Kiśōra Nyāyam*. That is he will take full responsibility for the *śishya* and do things.

Thus instead of acting according to two *nyāyams* it can be said that the guru-*śishya* relationship is mutual, each holding on to the other.

It is said that if one has the real thirst to find a guru *Īśwara* himself will see to it that such a guru himself comes in search of him. There are several instances of this when we see that the guru himself comes to the *śishya* and that looks like *Mārjāra Kiśōra Nyāyam*. But once the guru comes a *śishya* also should catch hold of him like what the young monkey does.

There is a small correction to what I have said. The guru also needs the *śishya*. If no one comes to him to learn whatever he has learnt and has experienced he will also be worried that all that will go waste after his time. The fact of a guru being anxious that the *brahmachāris* should come to him is mentioned in *Thaithirīyam* as a mantra. These days we practically see that by doing 'Avanthi *Hōmam*' with that mantra, several *pātasālās* which were in a state of decline have come back to life with boys joining them.

Even though it is not known who the guru is the *śishya* makes a search thinking 'I need a guru, I do not know who that guru is'. Then that guru comes to him. This is possible only if the *śishya* has in his mind a guru as a principle although he is not in search of a particular guru. Since he is the first to do that we can say that this accords with *Markataka Kīśōra Nyāyam*.

It also happens that the Sadhguru of his own accord takes one under his care and elevates him even if he does not go in search of a guru. This is rare. That is when *Mārjāra Kīśōra Nyāyam* starts. It can be more correctly called '*Mārjāra Māthā Nyāyam*'.

We as *śishyas* will do whatever we do as Markataka *Kīśōr* without expecting what the guru will do. He has to do only one thing namely to give *jnāna* but in whatever way he wants. But we should be certain as *śraddhāvān* that he will do it and hold on to him.

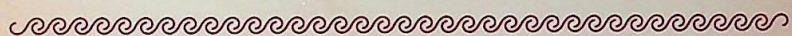
There is a reason why I talk about the two *Śaraṇāgathi nyāyās* although it is not known which of them has the stamp of finality. In both the reference is to *kīśōram*. Only so long as the monkey is young it will hold on to the mother and similarly the mother cat will pick up the young one. Whether it is monkey or cat, once the young one has grown, it leaves the mother and goes away. The mother also does not bother about it. But the guru-*śishya* relationship is not like this. It is to point this out I spoke about the two *Nyāyās*. Guru and *śishya* never leave each other. The *śishya* comes to the guru like the young one so far as spiritual

aspiration is concerned. Even after he becomes fully evolved by the grace of the guru and the 'milk of *jnāna*' that he gives the relationship between the guru and *śishya* continues. Even after the *śishya* has become Adhvaitha *jnāni* so far as the guru is concerned he will continue to have gratitude in dwaitha *bhāva*. The guru also, even though he is Adhvaitha *jnāni*, will teach the *śishya* as being separate and give him *upadēsam*. The guru-*śishya* relationship continues even after the guru's life journey is over and he has attained siddhi. Even the Adhvaitha *jnānis* continue to shower their grace even after their *Vidhēha Mukthi*. Those who have experienced this know this. If it is asked how, we cannot say. It can only be said that *Īswara*'s *līlā* is that even after their body and *karmā* have perished the compassion alone survives without perishing. Thus the loving relationship between the guru and *śishyas* continues for all times without getting dissolved as adhvaitham.

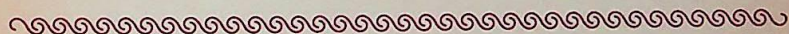
From the fact that *Āchāryā* himself prays with great bhakthi to his guru, Paramaguru and the entire *paramparā* (lineage) of Brahma *Vidhyā* gurus his attitude of devotion as *śishya* is clear. When *śishyas* such as *Surēshwarāchāryā*, *Padmapādhāchāryā*, *Thōtakāchāryā* and others who are *jnānis* worship him his own attitude of guru is seen. The fact that he and other *jnānis* toured the whole country and did *upadēsam* and written Adhvaitha books for the sake of posterity shows the devotion of guru *bhāva*.

One feels like saying that in the *līlā* of *Parāśakthi* something like the guru-*śishya* dwaitham is permanent even for Adhvaithis in order to show the greatness of love - the love shown by guru by way of compassion and the love of the *śishya* by way of his bhakthi.

One object of the entire discussion is to tell that a *śishya* has to surrender to the guru and even if there are more than one guru it should be *Śarāṅgathi* to one who is important and whole-hearted respect for others.



THE STATE





THE STATE AND RELIGION

DHARMA CHAKRAM - INDICATION OF LORD'S GRACE

At this moment when our *Bhārath* has become a free country all the people of this ancient land should pray to the Lord wholeheartedly. Let us pray that we may be blessed with the strength to involve ourselves fully in the spiritual line which has gained for us the greatest glory among all that is great in our land over the ages. It is only with his grace that we can protect this freedom as real freedom and through that not only our people can have permanent happiness but helped the people of the world to have it.

Fortunately, the chakra (wheel) which is the Lord's dharma *swarūpam* (form) has found place in the middle of the flag of free India. Although it may appear that the views of the leaders who had designed the flag may look like being different, we feel '*Bhagawān* occupies the highest place in this country. It will remind us that the entire life of the people is centered around him, his protection is there for a free India for all times and it is to indicate that he has blessed that the wheel should be at the center of the flag'.

* * *

TRUE SECULARISM

The rulers of today are of the view that secularism should be followed by the Government of free India in respect of religion. They understand this to mean that the State will not be inclined to any particular religion.

It is necessary to point out that this is not correct and show what is true secularism. It is not that the State should be completely detached from all religions. On the other hand a State

instead of being supportive of a particular religion should support all the religions. The State should support all religions with equal concern and help in their growth without mutual ill-will.

* * *

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATE IN ELEVATING THE PEOPLES' MIND

It is true that it is the important responsibility of the State to do all that is necessary for the health of the people and the improvement of the quality of their life through education, agriculture and other economic activities, to take care of internal and external security etc. But more important than the physical health is the mental health. The State cannot discard it. A country where people are not mentally elevated cannot be called a country. The State therefore has to help people in this regard. Since it is religion that develops the mental health it is definite that the State has a part to play in nurturing religion.

We see in practice that no developmental activity relating to worldly life gives permanent benefit and happiness. This kind of development becomes purely temporary and in securing it there is great competition etc. On the whole there is only loss of peace. Because of modern discoveries the luxuries of life keep increasing. We are never satisfied and keep chasing them all the time. If our life ends with such endless effort to increase physical comfort it will be pitiable, despite being endowed with the rational faculty. What is required is that we have to find the ways and means of making what is imperfect into the perfect one, to make the temporary pleasures of life into permanent bliss. Good conduct, the ways of dharma, devotion to God and spiritual thinking provide the way for it. This is like the 'thriphala' which gives strength. The State has a part to play in turning our attention which is entirely on worldly improvement to development of mind.

LIMITATIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN MATTERS OF RELIGION

When it is said that the State has a part to play one thing needs to be understood. The State has merely a share in nurturing faith in religions as a means to develop the mind. That means the state should not entirely take over the responsibility for religious affair. It should not exceed the limits in discharging its share of responsibility. Therefore the State should not at all interfere in the rules and practices of religions.

Irrespective of whether the State adopts the secularism by which it equally patronises all religions or the wrong type of secularism by which it keeps no connection with any religion it should not make laws in furtherance of its social policies which are contrary to the rules laid down in religion. Even after adopting the wrong type of secularism by which the State is neutral to all religions if it tries indirectly to interfere in the rules of religions we cannot accept it. But if a government wants to make laws in accordance with its social policies and if such laws are contrary to religious rules it should follow the basic policy that it will disregard equally the rules of all religions and mete out justice to people. If the government tries to interfere in the rules of a particular religion and spare other religions from such interference it will amount to the serious mistake of violating the basic policy of democratic equality to all citizens.

Before making laws concerning any branch it is the duty of the government to consult those who have vast knowledge and experience in it and obtain their advice. For this purpose, there should be a committee of experts for each branch.

Today when all over the world the function of governments is seen to cover economic development and security so far as religion is concerned it concerns the soul and is beyond the function of the government. It is not necessary that the rulers

should have knowledge in the field of religion. In fact they need not even be religious. Therefore it means that this branch is beyond the purview of the government's law making powers.

* * *

INDEPENDENT BODY OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL RELIGIONS

As a result of the above concept it becomes necessary that the government should organize an independent and autonomous body for taking decisions on matters of religion and it should keep itself completely away from it. It is only on the recommendation of such a body the government can make any law if need be.

The objective of this independent body is to draw plans and implement them to nurture devotion to God, thinking of the soul, love, truth, straightforwardness, service, humility etc which are common to all religions. Its chief function should be to instill these good qualities in the followers of all religions who have been indulging in mutual quarrel and between sections of the same religions. The government should provide financial assistance to these bodies, not only because the government has a role in elevating the minds of people but also because all sections of people have to remain united for the government to function in an atmosphere of peace.

Who are those who are fit to find a place in this body? They should be those great persons who have dedicated their life to the study of the scriptures of their religion and in following the *anushtānās* of their religion. In addition to such persons, those who have these qualifications and are also well versed in the conduct of worldly affairs, who have close relationship with people and know their mind and attitude should also be members. Only such a body can make the people advance in this field. There should be no interference of the government in this field for making changes.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS SHOULD NOT INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN POLITICS

We wish to say the same thing about the role of religious leaders. That is, religious leaders should never interfere in matters of governance. In human nature when involving in worldly affairs which is the field of action of the government not only is there room for intellect and experience but there is also scope for certain other short comings like any other field. Politics also has evolved as a branch and since power and fame are part of this there are several aspects in this about which those whose way is dharma have to feel sorry. Therefore if religious leaders who have the responsibility to raise the people in regard to their mind and heart have to save themselves from the danger of sliding down they have to remain completely away from politics and government.

To keep reminding the government that it should act to nurture religion, to express appreciation when the government acts in this manner, to boldly criticize it if it interferes in matters of religion - beyond this religious leaders should not have connection with the government. Mixing politics with religion is like destroying the very source where water is purified. Their attention should be restricted entirely to religion.

* * *

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT GAINS BY NURTURING RELIGION

As an added reason for government extending support to all religions we wish to show that apart from the government having its share in elevating the minds of people the government itself benefits by such elevation. Presently, the government has to spend a lot over policing, courts etc because lot of offences are committed in violation of law and order. Apart from the expenditure, the very function of maintaining law and order is a

heavy burden. If a small portion of this money is spent on nurturing religion and all the religionists are enabled to carry out maintenance of their places of worship, making grants to sathsang and to worthy individuals in the manner of the kings of olden times, people will get mentally elevated and offences will come down substantially as in olden times. When the opportunity for material enjoyment are on the increase and the desire of the people keeps increasing the need for the government to nurture religion gains greater importance.

Today in most countries people of several religious faiths live together. Therefore the correct way of following secularism will be for the government to support all religions equally and help in nurturing them. When due to modern science and revolutionary ideas there is a danger all over the world of spirituality being lost and if the human beings are not to become like animals this kind of secularism has to be followed.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT : HINDU RELIGION AND OTHER RELIGIONS

We wish to make clear one point about our plea that the government of our country should bear the expenditure for the growth of all religions. We want that other religionists also should have an impartial view of this and accept it.

It is widely known that for two important religions there will be no need for assistance from the government and there are institutions to help them liberally. They function like a government. It is also well known that these religions undertake several activities to convert people of other religions to their own. They are comfortably placed for ensuring the growth of their religion and spread it.

It is only the Hindus who though in a majority are in a difficult position. Here is a small example to show their bad state. We do not see that other religions issue advertisement for collecting funds for construction of their places of worship or to renovate old ones. But in case of Hindus we see even for a small temple such ads are issued repeatedly. It only shows the weakness of Hindu religion in that it does not have the support of individuals or institutions.

* * *

INSTITUTIONS OF HINDU RELIGION : LACKING IN MAN POWER AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

So far as the Hindu religion is concerned it has been the policy in ancient times that more than the religion being protected institutionally the individual by following the *anushtānās* of the religion should protect it by the power of personal life. About 2500 years back when there was decline in the number of such people who observed the *anushtānās* and showed personal examples of their lives Buddhism came to be established on the basis of Hindu philosophical concepts. Buddhism gave greater importance to institutions. One of its basic philosophy was that people should surrender not only to Buddha but to the Sangham - the institutions that were established to train people in religion and for propagating religion. How can a new religion grow unless people following old religions are converted? Therefore it happened. It was at that stage *Ādhi Sankara* who came on the scene realized that Hindu religion was also in need of institutional protection and therefore he established the Mutts. Later when other branches of Hindu religion appeared, they too established such institutions. Till today all the Mutts of all the branches of religions are functioning. But they do not have man power or financial resources to offer protection to the crores and crores of

Hindus all over the country. Because the great men of our religion had thought that it was better to protect our religion by the power of the *anushtānās* of the head of the Mutt and by his *upadēsam* and if man power and money power becomes available beyond a limit it will be harmful to spiritual atmosphere, our Mutts have their constraints.

* * *

RELIGIONS NURTURED BY KINGS AND PEOPLE

But since the kings and people of olden times were all religious minded Hindu religion got nourishment through them. It is temple worship which protects the religion for a community of people and protects them through religion. Since such temples are spread all over the country, maintenance and renovation of temples has been central to the protection of religion. For the maintenance of the several temples which are gigantic in size money needed is also on a large scale. The kings and people had taken this responsibility. The part played in this by the Mutts which were established as institutions for religion was very little.

From the time of rule by foreigners practicing other religions, there was decline in government support. With the coming of British rule, the Hindus themselves became attracted to their way of life and started neglecting their culture and lost the interest in protecting their religion.

* * *

WHAT THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT FAILED TO DO: HOW HINDU RELIGION WAS AFFECTED

It is not possible to refrain from telling the truth that even the fight for freedom failed to turn the people in the right direction in this respect. The important leader of the movement was keen

not only about removing foreign rule but also that the infatuation that the people had developed for the way of life of the foreigners should be removed. But the other leaders and the people who followed them did not pay much attention to this aspect. Since they thought that the entire attention should be focused on rescuing the country from foreign rule, no effort was made to turn the people away from their fascination for the western way of life. The situation in which the Hindus particularly were losing interest in their own religion continued. This was the position when freedom came.

What is to be noted here is that among the Indians it is only the Hindus for whom the interest in their own religion declined. The Muslims were always greatly attached to their religion and also they had great unity within their community and they were not attracted to the Western ways in the manner of Hindus. Since the Christians were followers of the religion of the rulers, this question did not arise for them. Hindu religion only was affected.

Even during the freedom struggle there were one or two organizations which were not religious in nature but were social organizations and which had fought for Hindu religion and the Hindu society. But for this, the massive freedom movement did not do anything in this direction and Hindu religion was in a state of decline at the dawn of freedom.

If these facts are appreciated in an impartial manner by non-Hindus, they will admit that the government must contribute its share in elevating the minds of the people, that since history shows that this had been achieved only by religion, the government must render assistance to all religions and Hindu religion which has been affected to a great extent should get the larger share of financial support from the government.

* * *

PEOPLE OF ALL RELIGIONS TO LIVE AS BROTHERS

In matters like protecting religion what the people can do is much more than what the government can do. First of all people of each religion who are strongly attached to it must create an awakening among others of the same religion. There is greater need for this in Hindu religion. People of each religion should place before those of other religions their just rights by fair argument and with love and try to get their acceptance of their views. This is because the people of this country have to live like brothers irrespective of their religion. Instead if we indulge in mutual quarrels because of religious feelings our life will be wasted and peace in the country will be spoiled. Therefore the first requirement is not to have antagonism just because of religion and people of other religions should be approached in a friendly way and rights and demands which are fair must be placed before them. The Hindus who are in a majority have to show the way in this respect. This may not be acceptable to those who have strong feelings of pride about their own religion. The reason is that generally it is the minority which loses its rights and has to show subservience to the majority. This is what obtains in the world since those who are on majority are more powerful. But strangely the position is different in this country.

* * *

THE STRANGE POSITION OF THE MINORITIES AND THE MAJORITY IN INDIA

People of other countries have noted and spoken that right from ancient times those belonging to the majority religion here have been by and large docile (*sāthvik*) and others have been stronger. In addition since the important Hindu leaders of the freedom movement have been more considerate to the minorities in the name of conciliation today those of the minority religion

have become strong enough to have this country divided and carve out a separate land for themselves. But the majority is in the position of having to appeal to the government and fight for its rights. In this situation, it is natural for a section of people to ask 'how can the Hindus whose religion is the ancient religion of this land and who are still the majority take the first step to approach other religionists and seek their acceptance for their own just rights?' But our considered opinion is whoever it is he must keep aside all other things and to try for mutual goodwill which is good for us and the country. Other means should be considered only if this attempt fails. What is intended to be made clear here is that if it is possible to obtain government assistance for development of religions attempt should be made to convince others that it is Hindu religion which should get a larger share of such assistance.

But since the State has to treat all religions as equal, in order to demonstrate it, a token financial assistance can be given to other religions also.

* * *

ASPECTS OF RELIGION WHICH NEED STATE SUPPORT

What we intended to convey is that the state must extend its help in a smaller or bigger way to all religionists to print their religious literature and propagate them through preachers, to repair and renovate temples and to build new temples at places not involved in controversy etc. The policy of secularism to be followed by the new government should help on these lines.

* * *

PEOPLE'S SUPPORT IS THE ASSET IN MATTERS OF RELIGION

We only say that the State should take responsibility to share a part of the expenditure for the activities mentioned above and

not entirely. If they have to bear all the expenditure, the people's contribution towards such activities will stop and that should not happen. In matters of religion it is the support of the people which is basic. They should extend support not only physically but also financially. Therefore the people and the State must together share the responsibility for the development of religious activities.

* * *

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

In the context of development of religious activities mentioned above we wish to make clear what pertains to religious preaching. This aspect is most important. All views expressed above are on the basis that our people who have gained political freedom must also have freedom of religion. All the views have been expressed in the belief that the Constitution will guarantee such freedom.

This freedom means the statutorily guaranteed freedom of the citizen to follow his religion. Such a religion will be by and large the religion into which the citizen is born. It is natural that one takes a liking to a religion which his parents, brothers and sisters are following. But some people may develop a liking for another religion. Or they may not like to follow any religion. Whatever it may be religious freedom means that each one follows whatever religion he wants including no religion.

According to *sāsthrās*, giving up one's own religion is as great a sin as deserting the mother. The duty of religious leaders like me is to protect the ways of *Sāsthrā* without allowing them to be changed according to circumstances. But in today's situation of democratic individual freedom there is no scope to compel the state to implement only the rules of *sāsthrās*. We are in a situation in which we have to respect the contrary view that any one can

have the freedom to follow any religion of his liking and therefore we ventured to stay like this.

When the citizens have the freedom of religion the leaders and followers of all religions must have equal rights to propagate and spread their religions among others. Such propaganda should help strengthen their own attachment to their religion and the attachment of their religionists in a way that it will be of great help in they and their religion getting mutual protection.

* * *

PROPAGANDA - THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAY

It is in this context of propaganda and a person changing to a religion of his liking, religious conversion comes. It is to watch such propaganda very carefully and ensure that it does not go the wrong way. When preaching religion, its concepts and principles are placed before the society at large. By this it becomes possible for people of other religions to hear, read and get to know them. When someone develops real liking for the principles and *anushtānās* of another religion and wants to change to that religion it will be due to genuine change of heart.

* * *

BAN ON AND PUNISHMENT FOR WRONG METHODS

The purpose of Dharma is to make one's right what are truths. Law is meant for implementing such dharma. Therefore when the State come forward to make laws conferring the right to religion, it should also make it a law that religious conversions can take place only when an individual desires to convert and his desire is based entirely on the principles and practices of the new religion. Such a law becomes necessary to ensure that methods totally unconnected with religion are not used for religious conversions.

not entirely. If they have to bear all the expenditure, the people's contribution towards such activities will stop and that should not happen. In matters of religion it is the support of the people which is basic. They should extend support not only physically but also financially. Therefore the people and the State must together share the responsibility for the development of religious activities.

* * *

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

In the context of development of religious activities mentioned above we wish to make clear what pertains to religious preaching. This aspect is most important. All views expressed above are on the basis that our people who have gained political freedom must also have freedom of religion. All the views have been expressed in the belief that the Constitution will guarantee such freedom.

This freedom means the statutorily guaranteed freedom of the citizen to follow his religion. Such a religion will be by and large the religion into which the citizen is born. It is natural that one takes a liking to a religion which his parents, brothers and sisters are following. But some people may develop a liking for another religion. Or they may not like to follow any religion. Whatever it may be religious freedom means that each one follows whatever religion he wants including no religion.

According to *sāsthrās*, giving up one's own religion is as great a sin as deserting the mother. The duty of religious leaders like me is to protect the ways of *Sāsthrā* without allowing them to be changed according to circumstances. But in today's situation of democratic individual freedom there is no scope to compel the state to implement only the rules of *sāsthrās*. We are in a situation in which we have to respect the contrary view that any one can

have the freedom to follow any religion of his liking and therefore we ventured to stay like this.

When the citizens have the freedom of religion the leaders and followers of all religions must have equal rights to propagate and spread their religions among others. Such propaganda should help strengthen their own attachment to their religion and the attachment of their religionists in a way that it will be of great help in they and their religion getting mutual protection.

* * *

PROPAGANDA - THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAY

It is in this context of propaganda and a person changing to a religion of his liking, religious conversion comes. It is to watch such propaganda very carefully and ensure that it does not go the wrong way. When preaching religion, its concepts and principles are placed before the society at large. By this it becomes possible for people of other religions to hear, read and get to know them. When someone develops real liking for the principles and *anushtānās* of another religion and wants to change to that religion it will be due to genuine change of heart.

* * *

BAN ON AND PUNISHMENT FOR WRONG METHODS

The purpose of Dharma is to make one's right what are truths. Law is meant for implementing such dharma. Therefore when the State come forward to make laws conferring the right to religion, it should also make it a law that religious conversions can take place only when an individual desires to convert and his desire is based entirely on the principles and practices of the new religion. Such a law becomes necessary to ensure that methods totally unconnected with religion are not used for religious conversions.

Religious preaching, if it is not with the objective of making religion more clear and better understood by its own followers but is aimed at converting other religionists, it is foul propaganda. Such foul propaganda will only mean speaking untruth and it is an offence in law. Law is meant to lay down punishments to prevent offences. Therefore the constitution should make it an offence if religious propaganda takes the form of inviting other religionists to join a particular religion. *

*In another context the *Mahāswāmi* had said : Religionists who indulge in conversion make the plea; 'it is part of our important religious tenets that all people should be converted to our religion. Therefore it becomes part of our religious rights for us. If the government which grants religious freedom takes away this right (to convert) it would amount to causing harm to the very religious rights which it granted. The State has no authority to do this.

This argument is totally unacceptable. This can be made clear by quoting from history. In the statecraft of the olden times it was permissible for a king to invade another country and expand his territory and the methods for doing it were also laid down. This had been happening all over the world for thousands of years. The kings got into conflict and wars for no other reason but just to expand each one's territory.

When we move from the olden times to modern times whether human society has improved in other aspects are not - in several ways it has been declining - we have become wiser in this one respect. Have not all the countries accepted in principle that it is wrong for any country to invade another? Even though it is true that the two World Wars were fought in the first part of this (20th) century and there is continuing cold war and also there is attempt on the part of major powers to control other countries indirectly

through commercial interest, as a matter of political principle it has been accepted that it is against civilized behavior for a country to invade another country just for expanding its territory. World today condemns people like Hitler who invaded other countries without reason. Will it be all right if we keep repeating what was considered legitimate in olden times, namely, invasion for the purpose of expansion? In the same manner the policy of religious conversion and expansion of the olden times cannot be approved now. It is as wrong to take over the whole community of people through religious conversion as it is to take over a country physically.

Perhaps a good reason can be mentioned for conversion being part of the religious principles of those religions which indulge in conversion. That is : the founders of those religions discovered some truths relating to soul and divinity and made them the basis of a new religion. We can assume that since those truths had given them a sense of fulfillment they believed that their religion only can give such fulfillment to others also and therefore they must have given the command that others also should be brought into the fold of the new religion.

But however great the founders of such new religions might have been, what they thought - that their religion is the only way and there is no other way - cannot be accepted as correct. Just as in Lord's creation there is variety in everything it is so in religion also.

What the *Vēdhās* say namely that there are several ways to reach the one *Paramāthmā* is the truth (sathyam). Our Hindu religion is *Sanāthana* Dharma which has within itself all such ways. Whether on the basis of philosophy or theology or morality which is dharma and right conduct all of which the Hindus have in all their varieties there is no justification for other religionists to invite the Hindus to their religion. Among other religionists also intellectuals

with an impartial view have spoken and written a lot about the greatness of our religion. Not that even among those who engage in conversions many are not unaware of the greatness of our religion. Even then if they try to find fault and attack, it is because they think that it is their religious duty to do so.

If one tries to find fault it can be found in anything. Every religion will have its faults. But if we keep doing only this we will only be smearing ourselves with the dirt of hatred and, without going on any right path, we will be moving away from the *Paramāthmā*.

Just as in a huge banyan tree a few leaves may be spoiled some shortcomings may have crept into our religion also. But due to the fault of the person who is viewing, shortcomings may be seen even in perfect things. For ages, over a timeless period, for generations, Hindu religion has given the feeling of fullness to countless people and even today it is a living force. It will be the conclusion of anyone who looks at it impartially that there is no justification to draw the Hindus out of such a religion to other religions.

There may be justification for converting the nomads, the tribals, those following disgusting ways of worship, uncivilized adivasis but not those who are well established in a mature religion and are in highly civilized society. If we look at history there is a lot of evidence to show that conversions have been indeed done in unfair ways by branding people as nomads, tribals etc. Some people were living in small numbers in huge areas and were following some form of religion - religion which had several good aspects. They were wrongly damned as uncivilized and were either converted or eliminated and their territory was occupied. How can legal rights be claimed for doing the same thing to the Hindus in a different and clever manner? Converting others like this can never be a part of one's freedom of religion.

If the State has ensured property rights to everyone and made laws for that, what does it mean? It only means that one can enjoy what rightfully belongs to oneself but not claim the property of others. It is the same in the case of religion. Freedom of religion only means that each one can follow a religion of his choice but should not drag other people to his religion. One can freely preach his religion but without attacking the ways of other religions. But if it is done with the view of drawing others to one's religion it will only affect the religious rights of others. It is a different matter if a person, of his own, likes the other religion and wants to take to it.

Another important thing to be noted is that our Hindu religion does not resort to conversion at all. Religions which have the policy of conversion may clash between themselves and put out justification for conversion. If other religions make a pointed attack on the religion which is *sāthvik* and which minds its own business, without clashing with others it can never be fair or just.

Therefore it is necessary that the government should not accept the plea that conversion is a cardinal tenet of a religion but make laws to prevent conversion. Keeping in view the spiritual welfare, peace and order in the country, this is very important.

Any objection to this based on the right to propagate religion in accordance with the right to religion cannot stand; because religious preaching should only explain the aspects and principles of a religion. Freedom of religion will give scope for one to be voluntarily drawn to that religion. Religious preaching does not mean explaining the principles of the religion to those of other religions and inviting them to join them.

* * *

HINDU RELIGION AND CONVERSION; RE-CONVERSION TO SET RIGHT ORIGINAL CONVERSION

It is to be noted that the intellectuals of other countries and those who have experienced the Hindu religion have embraced it out of their own liking and because they were attracted to it. There could be a counter question about Hindu religious leaders having converted Buddhists and Jains to Hinduism in olden times. Our reply to this is that those who were so converted were originally Hindus who had gone to those new religions due to the preaching of those religionists but in later days Hindu religious leaders did not engage themselves in reconverting those original Hindus who had become Buddhists or Jains and who had remained so for generations. They only tried to prevent the younger generations of Hindus going to those religions.

What is to be noted is that Hindus never thought of converting to Hinduism those who had come to India from the time of Alexander and even before the birth of Christianity and had settled down here due to trade and commercial links etc. Even when Christians and Muslims came to India in large numbers and indulged in forced conversions Hindus never tried to convert the original Christians and Muslims to Hinduism. They did not even try to reconvert those who had converted to Christianity or Islam but only tried to prevent, by way of counter propaganda, more and more Hindus being drawn to those religions.

Another noteworthy aspect is that the Hindu kings freely allowed the other religionists to build their places of worship. Some of the kings even went further in the name of religious tolerance and gave grants for building such places of worship. Several kings have themselves built for them their places of worship. All in all, the Hindus never went on the offensive to bring into their fold other religionists. They were only engaged in defence to see that their own population did not go down further.

What the Hindus did in olden times in a big way and what is now being done on a small scale is only to reconvert the original Hindus to Hinduism and not convert those of other religion. In this there is a difference between what has been done in olden times and what is being done now. In olden times those who changed to Buddhism and Jainism which were born in this country were brought back to Hinduism. Now what is being attempted is to bring back to their Hindu fold those Hindus who had converted to religions of foreign origin in recent times. The reason for this is : In the course of history Buddhism almost disappeared from its land of birth.*

(* This was said before those like Dr.Ambedkar started converting Hindus to Buddhism).

As for Jainism it has taken several aspects of Hinduism and has become a kind of sister-religion. Moreover, followers of this religion are not now indulging in conversion. On the other hand, there is no let up in the conversion activities of other religionists.

The fact to be noted once again is : Even in this situation no attempt is made to convert to Hinduism the descendents of those who came to this country as Muslims and Christians. It is not even to reconvert the Hindus who went to those religions some generations back. The attempt is only to bring back to the original fold those Hindus who have been recently converted to other religions.

* * *

USE OF METHODS UNRELATED TO RELIGION TO MEET WITH SEVERE PUNISHMENT:

Whatever has been said till now about freedom of religion is about preaching of one's religion. But what recent history has shown is that more than religious preaching with wrong objective,

conversions are being done through methods not related at all to religion. In any society the majority of people are those who are ordinary and simple and who are not knowledgeable and are not capable of analyzing matters before accepting them as truths. It is the case with the Hindu society also. Such people among the Hindus have been converted in hordes through wrong means.

These methods are of two types. Both are not such as explain the features of the religions by which people of other religions would get attracted to it. One is forced conversion. When there is rule by people of a particular religion, resorting to measures such as levying a special tax on other religionists etc fall under this category of forced conversion. The second type is one of inducement - through education, medical aid and other social welfare activities. These are carried out through religious institutions. By doing this the beneficiaries are made to feel indebted and by referring to this directly or indirectly conversion is done. The most detestable of all these is to indulge in conversion through bribes.

Since forced conversions and conversions through inducements are both worse than malpropaganda they should be treated as serious offences under the law and punishment should be meted out.*

*Regarding this the *Mahāswāmi* spoke as follows in another context :-

If objection is raised to conversion being done through establishments of educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages etc some people give the suggestion that we, the Hindus can do the same thing and stop conversions the easy way. The suggestion is that Hindus too could establish similar institutions.

Those who give the suggestion do not seem to know two things. The other religionists have established these institutions in

a big way in almost all the major towns of this vast sub-continent. If we have to compete with them the finance needed will be thousands of crores. The other religions have lots of funds. They have sources which can supply funds more than the government treasuries. It is doubtful whether we can collect even a small part of such money from the Hindu community. Even if our people develop strong attachment to our religion and try to raise resources by curtailing their own needs, we will not be able to match the resources of other religionists.

Apart from the social service activities the question is how to counter the conversions through bribery? Do our friends suggest that our religionists also should indulge in malpractices similar to electoral malpractices? The other thing is more basic. That is, the whole thing is entirely wrong. To suggest that we will also commit the wrong is meaningless. What we should do is to stop the others from indulging in the wrong activities and not copy them.

There is a basic question which needs to be raised. What is the connection between someone getting the benefits of an educational institution, hospital or orphanage and his religion? Someone goes to the hospital to get cured of his disease. Those who have no one to care for them join orphanages to get protection in this life. Those who go to educational institutions do so to get educated and later get into jobs. Where does religion come in, in all these? Do people go to schools, colleges, hospitals and orphanages in search of a religion? Therefore to dangle these and draw people towards religion is wrong. It is not just wrong. It is an offence. The aim of social service is only social service. But when it is used for conversion it becomes cheating both in respect of social work and religion. Therefore even if at a future date the Hindu society becomes very affluent we should not take recourse to these two methods.

Since social service is very necessary let us, to the maximum of our means, establish schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages

etc. Since all these will mean nothing if the Lord is forgotten let us also arrange for prayer and bhajans in such institutions. But let us not make this too much thinking that these are the means for protecting our religion. By competing with others what should be an act of dharma should not be made adharmā. Even if others go the way of adharmā we should continue to follow the path of dharma and turn others also to that path. That only befits our Hindu culture. So the real relief will be to make religious conversion an offence.

A citizen's freedom of religion means the freedom for him to follow a religion of his own volition. This relates to the elevation of one's mind. Since the welfare of a country depends upon such people anything done which harms it should be considered a big offence. If we keep in mind that once religious freedom becomes a Constitutional guarantee it will be a serious offence to interfere with such freedom, it will be clear how big an offence is malpropaganda, forced conversion, conversion through inducement etc. The law should be such that the punishment will be deterrent.

But when conversion is done through inducement it becomes difficult to find it out. They can claim that they are helping people of all religions in the manner of what our own religion teaches. But the truth can be found out by knowing the social status of those who received such help, the number among them who had converted, their level of intellectual attainment etc. If a government realizes its responsibility in regard to ennobling the minds of people it should treat conversion also on par with looting, rape etc and make investigation. Something that harms the elevation of the mind should be treated as an offence on par with looting and rape.

* * *

SO LONG AS CONVERSION PREVAILS, RETURN TO PARENT RELIGION SHOULD BE PERMITTED:

It has not been possible to stop the occurrence of any offence merely by making laws. All kinds of offences do take place in all countries. If the offence of religious conversions which are not based on the wishes of the individuals takes place the government must permit return of the converts to their parent religion and that should not be considered an offence.

When the government gives the freedom to a citizen to follow any religion, it should also be alive to its responsibility to see that nothing is done to harm the freedom and should therefore legally prevent conversion. We have spoken about this elaborately because we have felt that as the head of the *Pitam* of a religion it is our responsibility to do so.

This does not mean that we object to the government of free India extending the same support to all religions. We lay emphasis on such support being extended in the proper manner and we welcome it. To the best of our understanding we have explained what is proper.

* * *

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: THE HIGH POINT OF INDIA

Even those like Vivekananda who had views which are praised even by modern day reformers and intellectuals of foreign countries like Annie Besant have emphasized that India's high point is only spirituality centered in religion. They have pointed out that if this is forgotten and progress is made in all other fields it will be like decorating a corpse. Hindu religion which is *Sanāthana* Dharma has ensured that the worldly desires of the people do not take a wild form. It has given them spirituality through religious practices and philosophy and has made everything connected with

worldly life holy through rituals centered around God. Thus it was that *Bhārat* acquired a special place among the countries of the world. *Dharma sāsthās* have laid down such rules that all activities of man become useful for the welfare of the soul. Since the people of this land have followed this path from ancient times, great men (*mahāns*) religious literature, philosophy etc came up in a big way and this was praised by the great men of other countries also. They too found spiritual elevation by this and with its help developed their *siddhāntās* to suit their own circumstances. Even today people of other countries who have enjoyed the worldly comforts to the maximum but have not found satisfaction in life are turning to our country to engage themselves in spiritual pursuit and find fulfillment.

Thus it has been a matter of pride for our country to show the path of spirituality to other countries. But we are discarding that spiritual pursuit and going after the worldly comforts following the other countries and just when we are getting our freedom this tendency has become very strong.

* * *

DECLINE OF RELIGIOUS FEELINGS IN INDIA: WHAT THE HISTORY OF A THOUSAND YEARS SHOWS

More than thousand years ago our coming under foreign rule started. Those who came in the early days belonged to other countries of Asia. Different groups among them captured power to varying degrees and finally the country came under their rule. The result was that in our country which was the country of Hindus and which showed the path to other countries thousands of years back the Hindus, more especially those of the northern parts of the country who were subjected to cruelties by the foreigners found it impossible to live the life of Hindus without fear and in a carefree manner. This caused a decline of the spiritual culture which gave

life to this country. As time passed, our own people, more particularly those of the North, started adopting some of the custom, culture, forms of dress etc of the foreigners. With all this, the matter for satisfaction was that even in that state of decline, Hindus preserved their individuality. The reason for this is that Hindus did not consider the foreigners as more civilized. After the passage of about 700 years, in the last three hundred years with the foreigners from European countries coming the situation changed in a disastrous way.

* * *

THE CUNNING WAYS OF FOREIGNERS AND THE 'TWO REVOLUTIONS':

They were quite capable in achieving by indirect methods their objectives of establishing their rule and making us neglect our spiritual pursuit and follow their ways and also feel proud of being their servants. The reason for this is that they were able to make us believe that the worldly-wise civilization of theirs was better than our spiritual civilization. Two revolutions helped in this.

Close on the heels of the arrival of the Westerners here, stunning scientific discoveries were made in their countries. One consequence of this was the Industrial Revolution by which there was introduction of machines in the field of production enabling the manufacture of large volumes of goods in a short time and this pushed to the background the cottage industry. In course of time, it made the cottage industries and handicrafts redundant. This revolution would have helped the Western countries with small populations and people with fascination for luxuries. They were able to take raw materials from their colonies, use them for production of goods through machines and they dumped much of what they produced on their colonies. But this revolution caused much harm to the great civilization of this land which had stood for

simple living and high thinking, giving the lowest priority to worldly pleasures and giving great importance to spiritual development. But we were carried away by the ways of the Europeans - particularly the educational system they had introduced - and forgot the greatness of our own civilization. Since we lagged behind in science we were greatly impressed by their scientific discoveries and considered them greater than us and as role models and started adopting their civilization.

As if the Industrial Revolution was not enough there came the French Revolution for the freedom of the individual. The revolution had its noble goal that the individuals should be freed from the wrong control of the government but it went beyond limits and made the people to free themselves from the ways of dharma and do things as they liked in the name of freedom. This took hold of the entire Western society and because of their great influence all over the world, this spread to other countries too. Our people too were attracted by this new idea of freedom and started giving up dharma, god, obedience to elders etc which had come from generation to generation. It was when this situation became serious that freedom came to us.

* * *

THE BIG QUESTION MARK BEFORE US

What are we going to do now? Are we going to return to our spiritual civilisation, become simple in worldly life and think high and attain a special status among the countries of the world and show them the way? Or, are we going to deliberately give up whatever is still left of our spiritual civilization, follow the worldly-wise culture of those who gave us freedom and left and lag behind other countries as a backward country? This is the most worrying question before us.

Is *Bhārat* going to be a really free Bharat? In other words is the country going to follow the ways of life that are exclusive to this country? Or, will the situation continue in which although the country has got political freedom our people will make such laws as will make the soul of this country a slave of the policy and lifestyle of the foreigners?

* * *

ATMOSPHERE OF DISBELIEF; THE RESULT OF GANDHISM NOT BEING ADOPTED

The atmosphere that prevails is one of lack of confidence. The one who led the freedom movement and came to be called the Mahatma was greatly drawn to the indigenous civilization of Bharat and pleaded for it. But among those who seem to be his followers, excepting very few, all others seem to have different views. Since the foreign life has taken roots here over a few generations, majority of our people are those who are happy about its growth in a big way.

It is human nature to display a kind of zeal in acts of opposition. It appears that it is because of this all our people have followed the Mahatma. It looks as if most of those who followed him had no idea of the real meaning of freedom but think that it will enable them to be free of all control and do things as they like. But people have not listened to his plea that our way of life should be consistent with our exclusive civilization. Therefore it is a matter of worry whether attention will be paid to what needs to be done. What needs to be done is that the leaders who have come to power now should properly understand secularism and implement it seriously, extend support to religions and find a remedy for the people's disease of fascination for worldly pleasures.

* * *

STATE RELIGION

Here we wish to express a view. There is a type of governance in which the religion followed by the majority of people over a long period is adopted as State religion and freedom is given to all other religionists to follow their religions and all religions are treated equally in the matter of State's support to religion. In our country the kings of the olden times had adopted Hindu religion or the *Sanāthana* Dharma as State religion and with the exception of one or two, they extended great support to the growth of other religions. England which has occupied the first place in modern progress has even today as National Anthem 'God save the king' which shows the faith in God born of religious attachment. Not only that, it has laid down as one of the duties of the king the protection of religion as the 'Defender of the Faith'. Moreover, it has adopted the Church of England as its religion and it is administered under the supervision of the Parliament. We should take note of this.

Therefore, we feel that there is great justification for announcing as State religion the Hindu religion which is followed by the majority of people, which is older than all other religions of the world, which has given basic principles and rituals to other religions and which even during its heyday did not indulge in religious conversion. It is a fact established by history that because of this the fair growth of other religions will not be affected in any manner.

Even so, when we see the hostility that has developed between two religions which has resulted in violence and loss of life and the country getting divided we have to agree to the giving up of the special status to the mother religion of this country and the State adopting secularism which does not conflict with extending support to all religions.

* * *

CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL SCHEME : GIVING IMPORTANCE TO TEACHING OF RELIGION

When the government of free India adopts this kind of secularism we wish to talk about a particular good measure which has to be taken for spiritualism to get new life and the mind of the people to get ennobled. That is, the scheme of education designed by the British in which emphasis was laid on gaining knowledge of science relating to the material world to the total neglect of religion should be changed at least now. It is the Hindus who have been affected by this system. The British government has so designed the system that in the schools of other religionists, religious teaching is being undertaken but our students who study in other schools do not get the advantage of the teaching of their religion but have Moral Instruction for name's sake. Therefore the youngsters of Hindu religion who have only such school curriculum followed by home work, play etc have been denied the knowledge of their religion and the attachment to the religion that comes of it. This is the main cause for creating in the Hindus the feeling of inferiority about their civilization and developing a fascination for the Western civilization. It is an important duty of the government of free India to change the system and draw a new scheme of education in which real religious teaching will find a place for students of all religions.

* * *

PEOPLE HAVE TO FIGHT FOR SPIRITUAL FREEDOM JUST AS FOR POLITICAL FREEDOM

But looking to the way things are moving questions do arise in the mind : 'will the government of free India do all these things? Will the Constitution be framed on such lines?' Since power has gone into the hands of national leaders who have modern revolutionary views it appears that secularism will be understood

to mean not being connected with any religion and they will act on that basis.

Therefore we call upon those intellectuals who are against the materialistic policies of other countries and are keen about our spiritual tradition to jump into the field with full vigour and also arouse the co-citizens. Now when India has got freedom there is the opportunity to make it a spiritual country with new life. Since it appears that the new government may let go the opportunity we insist that great persons who are still around and who realize the truth should whole-heartedly dedicate themselves to the task of waking up others. Just as an army of volunteers came up to fight for political freedom we give a call that an army of peaceful volunteers should gather to fight for spiritual freedom. We appeal and pray to the Lord to help in this task. We ask all good people to pray similarly.

Just as they did in the fight for political freedom, all people without distinction of religion or caste must come together and act now. Foreign rule was removed only to make a better country. If people who had come together as one in removing foreign rule stand separated today when they have the responsibility to make their country better the fruits of gaining freedom will be lost.

Pleasant duty of the majority to make the minorities love the land:

If in this communication we had to point out some of the wrong methods used by some communities it is only as a warning for the future and not to provoke the Hindus to show enmity to the descendents of those communities. It is our wish that the Hindus should be in the forefront to show that like they themselves all communities should get equal rights and be co-citizens. We desire that the Hindus should consider it their duty to move with the people of other religions with love and make them realize that they are also Bharatiyas. Only then the minority will develop the strong

feeling that Bharat is their motherland. If we remember what harm was caused by the leader of a minority creating in them contrary feelings in the last stage of freedom struggle we will realize what danger can come up in future if minorities do not develop the strong feelings that this is their motherland. Only if all people join together as citizens of the Lord's world and work together it will be possible to make this a country of peace and spirituality and show it as an example to the world.

* * *

THE REAL REASON FOR THE DHARMA CHAKRA HAVING FOUND A PLACE IN THE NATIONAL FLAG

We had mentioned earlier that, though we did not make a deliberate choice, it was the Lord who had ensured that his 'Dharma Chakram' found a place in the flag of free India. As far as we know the leaders with modern ideas and who commanded prestige had an important part in designing the flag of free India. Although they are more concerned about material progress they are great in right conduct, sacrifice and valor. They are highly patriotic without any selfish interest. They consider as dharma the rules of right conduct which is not related to concepts of divinity. In order to show that the people should follow that dharma they thought that an ancient symbol must find a central place in the flag. It is thus that the Dharma Chakra has found a place at the center of the flag.

These secular leaders selected this symbol of Dharma Chakra because it is the symbol of a great religion which does not prevail in this country now. Yet, since this symbol which is on the *Saranath* Pillar is connected with Emperor Asoka who has referred to himself in all his edicts as '*Dēvanām Priya*' (one who is the beloved of the *Dēvās*) it makes us feel proud. But dharma divorced from God is not practical. Ordinary people will follow dharma only if

they are given a Lord (*Īswara*) who has laid down the dharma for the world order, who does good to those who follow that dharma and punishes those who do not and for whom there will be both love and fear. That religion which forgot this practical truth and spoke only of right conduct did not help. The great men of that religion themselves found the decline that had occurred in the Sangams all over the country and became clear in their mind about what had gone wrong. The result was that they placed the founder of that religion himself in the place of god, built temples bigger than what the Hindus had built, installed idols and also laid down *manthrās* and ways of worship. In addition they also adopted the Hindu deities directly or indirectly. The modern reformers think that Asoka had propagated dharma which was divorced from the divine concept. But Asoka himself announced himself as 'one who is the beloved of the *Dēvās*'. Not considering the main idols of that religion as connected with divinity and taking note of only the word 'Dharma chakra pravartanam' (in Pali it is 'dhamma chakka pavartanam') they have engraved the chakra at the center of our flag. The meaning for those words is : 'To make the chakra which is dharma keep rotating well'. That is 'spreading the principles of that religion in all four directions'. However, it is a matter for satisfaction and joy that as a symbol of the government's aim to strive to spread the right ways the Dharma Chakra has been engraved at the center of the flag.

* * *

VĒDHIC SAYING AS THE NATION'S MOTTO

One more thing to feel happy about is that the Upanishad saying '*Sathyamēva Jayathe*' has been chosen as the National Motto. By this the fact that truth will be victorious is communicated to the people through the words of *Vēdhās* which are the basic scripture of *Sanāthana* Dharma. Here too it is being

made out that it is not particularly connected with Hindu religion but an ethical idea that prevailed all over the world. Whatever it may be we appreciate that the words of *Vēdhās* have been chosen for a national message. The official seal also consists of the Dharma Chakra and the multi-faced Lion of the Asoka Pillar with the motto below it.

* * *

IS IT DHARMA CHAKRA OR A FACTORY WHEEL?

There are people who doubt if in choosing the wheel there is some other thinking. Mahatma Gandhi who was the foremost among the leaders who fought for freedom thought that the exclusive culture of this land is simple living and therefore instead of resorting to machinery whatever is needed for our simple life should be produced through the labour of the people whose population is so large and with small tools. As a symbol of that thinking he had the charka which is useful in hand weaving inscribed in the flag of the Congress Party. But the apprehension is whether the leaders who have modern ideas have adopted the wheel which is the symbol of machinery in order to show that they want to introduce the western style luxuries and all that is required for such living will be produced through machines.

* * *

GĪTĀ'S DHARMA CHAKRAM

Whatever the truth we believe that although we have forgotten the Lord He has not forgotten us and with compassion has seen to it that His Dharma Chakra has found a place in our flag so that if not now at least at a future time our country will move on the traditional path and will gain fame as an alternative model to other countries. The reason is that thousands of years before the

founder of another religion talked of Dharma Chakra Pravarthanam Lord Krishna who holds the Chakra (*Sudarśan*) in His hand said it in the *Gītā*. He says '*Ēvam Pravarthitham Chakram*' (III. 16) (The wheel that keeps rotating like this) about the dharma which He has laid down for the people to follow, Dharma which keeps rotating as cause and effect. He starts it with man who is the ultimate effect and ends it with the original cause, the *Paramāthmā*. That chain consists of six parts each following the other.

* * *

THE PATH OF DHARMA CHAKRA - SACRIFICE IS ITS ESSENCE

Bhagawān starts the chain by saying that 'life originates from food'. What is this food? Why this importance to it?

The dharma for life laid down by the *Sanāthana Vēdha Dharmām* is sacrificing one's all for others without thinking of self-interest. That sacrifice is called 'yajnam'. 'Yajnam' is a *Vēdhic* ritual in which all that is best is sacrificed in the fire and through the 'Fire god' reached to the *Dēvās* who manage the affairs of this world as the officers of the Lord. In return the *Dēvās* give to all the beings everything that is required for the happy life. It should be noted that the Westerners refer to the yajnas and '*thyāgam*' as sacrifice only. For following this dharma of sacrifice one has to take care of his life and live. Therefore after giving to others what remains is to be used for oneself and simple life lived. Even that should be considered as *prasād* after what the *Dēvās* have taken. This is the rule according to *Vēdhic* dharma. The very first manthra in '*Īsāvāsyam*' which has the first place in Upanishad says 'a person cannot get the feeling of satisfaction and fullness by enjoying a thing himself; sacrifice it for others and get the full

fruits which can be obtained from the thing so sacrificed'. In giving thus, food (annam) takes the first place because life is born out of food. This is what gets the first place in the cause-effect chain which the Lord talked about in the *Gītā*.

How does that food become available? It is by rain. Since crops grow due to rain the Lord refers to 'food from rain' as the next in the chain. What is the source of rain? As mentioned earlier the *Dēvās* (whom we consider to be natural forces) who are the officials who function according to *Īśvara's* command become pleased by what is offered to them in the fire in yajnas. In return they give several good things, particularly rain which is necessary for the food to be produced. Therefore 'rain from yajna' is the third in the chain.

How did the yajna come about? It was by converting sacrifice into *karmā* such as yajna which is combined with the power of manthra. Therefore 'yajna from *karmā*' is the fourth in the chain.

What is the source of those *karmās* which have acquired strength by the greatness of *manthrās*? It is from the *Vēdhās*. 'Karmā from *Vēdhā*' is the fifth in the chain.

What is the source of the *Vēdhās*? *Vēdhās* which have neither a beginning nor an end are an inseparable part of the *Paramāthmā* as His breath. Thus *Bhagawān* makes this the sixth in the chain - 'Vēdhās from the *Paramāthmā*'. Thus he completes the chain of cause and effect.

The *Bhagawān*, continuing the *Upadēśa*, says that so far as man is concerned the *Vēdhās* become rooted in the yajnas which are the physical form of sacrifice. Here we become clear that not living for oneself but for others and curtailing our possession is the dharma as laid down for us by *Bhagawān*. This is clear beyond doubt by *Bhagawān* referring to the yajna of sacrifice also at the

end after having mentioned it as the third in the chain.

Bhagawān also warns that one who violates this Dharma Chakra and lives for himself incurs only sin throughout his life and his life becomes a waste.

May the political freedom that we have got through the Lord's grace give dharma and all that is required to live a life of dharma, the pleasures which do not conflict with dharma and finally the great bliss of liberation!

* * *

PRAYERS AND BLESSINGS FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COUNTRY

The country has struggled for a long time to achieve independence. Let us offer our prayers to the great Lord so that by the freedom which has been obtained by His grace, the blessings of great men and the unparalleled sacrifices of the people our country may become prosperous and our people may live without social and inter-group strife and remain united.

Following the independence of our country we should be keen to achieve individual freedom. It is only if we understand ourselves fully we would have become really free. Contrary to this now our mind and the senses are not under our control. We are unable to give up desire and anger. These two always keep harassing us. However much we acquire of anything we do not get satisfaction and peace from it. Worries of the world do not leave us. We become upset even if we face a little sorrow. What is the way out of this?

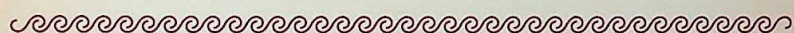
Our mind should be under our control. Efforts should be made little by little to bring it under our control. Once the mind is controlled we will need nothing else. That indeed is the absolute freedom which we should get.

Everyday at least for a brief time we should keep the mind at peace and instead of allowing it to go after other thoughts we should meditate on God. By such *dhyāna* in course of time the mind will become clear. This is the way to control desire and anger. One who undertakes this *sādhana* step by step will attain '*āthma jnāna*' soon. It is only the one who gets that *jnāna* who is really a free man.

We have to think of other women as mothers. We have to think of other lives as our own. Even at the risk of our lives we should speak only the truth. We should completely eliminate social and inter-groups strifes. Each one should think that all people should live well. Each one should strive for improving his intellectual ability and spiritual power. We should pray to God for blessing us with the buddhi and the energy (*śakthi*) to achieve this.

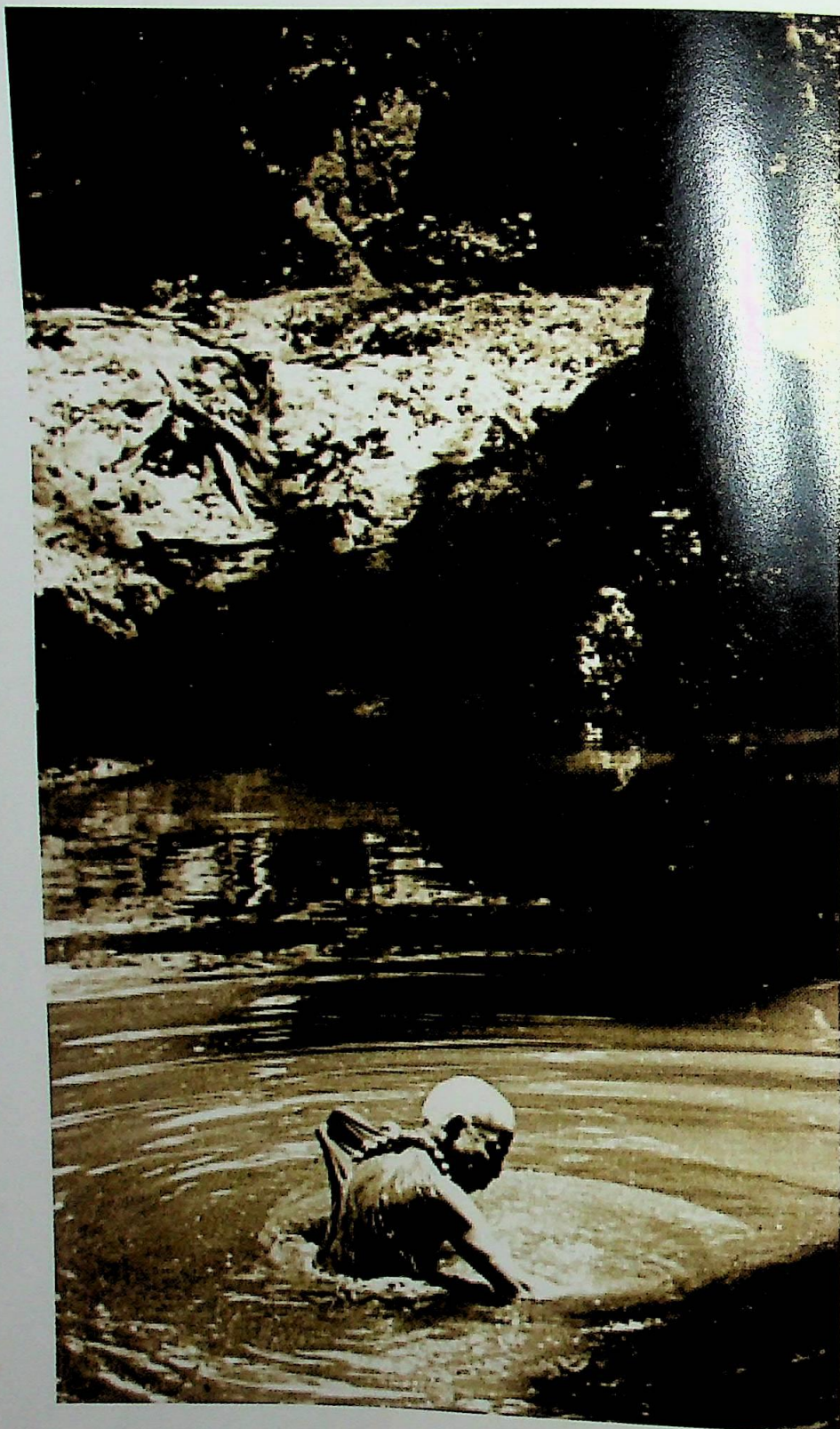
We pray that today's free India should serve as the beacon light of sacrifice to other countries just as the Bharat of old and we offer our blessings for this.

* * *



SOCIETY





FOR THE YOUNGSTERS

Your home is the family of which the father and mother are the heads. In the same manner this whole world is a big family of which *Īswara* and *Ambika* are the father and mother. You should have bhakthi for your parents and *Īswara* and *Ambā* who are the parents of the large world family. Between your family and the world family there is another family which is the school. Those who are your mates in the school are all like your brothers. The head of this family is the teacher. You should treat him also like the father and the mother and show respect to him.

During your school days your only duty is to study. Your entire attention should be directed to studies. This is not the time for you to engage yourself in other matters. Although there are several good things to be done you should devote time to those things only after you have completed your studies. You should not indulge in such things thinking 'I have the energy and the mind to involve myself in those things even now. Therefore I will embark upon those things which are good for the world'.

Suppose there is a person whose job it is to carry a load on his head or shoulder. If he has a catch in his hip what he will do? Even if he is able to carry some load at that stage he will not do so. He will first get well and then start carrying the load once he is completely well.

Doing good to the world is also like carrying a load. One needs energy for doing it. If without having sufficient energy one attempts to carry that load he will only fall ill physically and mentally. At a young age when the mind has not become sufficiently strong, if activities other than studies are undertaken the mind will become sick.

Already we have the diseases like desire, anger etc. We have got these diseases because we were carrying loads (of sins) in

earlier birth. Every wrong action of ours gets collected together as load. This load of a body has come as a result of previous wrongs. The impression of those wrongs are there in this body and that is why desire, anger etc. it is only to get rid of these we go to the school when we are young. The disease of ignorance is cured by the medicine of learning. Along with that our bad qualities (*guṇas*) also must go. For this learning alone is not enough. Humility is essential. If we are humble the bad qualities will get away. If we show devotion to the parents, the teacher and God and pay attention to studies knowledge will grow and along with it good qualities.

If one is well up only in studies and is without humility he cannot become a perfect man. Mere learning will only give rise to the pride : 'we know everything, we are intelligent'. *Bhagawān* will not help such persons. However intelligent one might be he cannot gain happiness in life if the Lord's grace is not there.

For the load of past mistakes the remedy is learning. It is only after taking these medicines carefully and making the load light we can carry other loads for doing good to the world. The doctor does not stop with giving medicines. He also gives instruction regarding what food is to be taken and which to be avoided. Without following such instructions a medicine will not be effective. If learning is a medicine for all of you the food restriction is to have humility. With humility be devoted to God, parents and the teacher and concentrate on your studies; the Lord will protect you.

* * *

FOR THE YOUNGSTERS - 2: BATHE YOUR MIND

Physical cleanliness: You are children and you should not suffer from itches etc. Itches will cause a lot of trouble. You

cannot sit, eat, play, study etc. Such skin diseases are caused by the accumulation of dirt on the body. Therefore the body should be kept clean. You have to take regular bath using soap or any other good powder. It is good if bath is taken twice in a day, in the morning and evening. If you get used to cold water bath even when young you will never be affected by cold, cough etc. A cold bath will be invigorating. It helps the mind to be peaceful and happy. We will feel active when doing work.

You have to be clean in all respects. Next to cleanliness of body is cleanliness of dress. If the dress you wear is dirty taking bath will not help. Dirt in the clothes you wear will also cause diseases. If clothes are given for wash they will be washed white and bright but better than that is for you to wash your clothes yourself. Washing the cloth will be an exercise for you. If you wash your own clothes and make them white and bright you will have a feeling of satisfaction and pride. Your parents will also be happy. Expenditure on account of getting the clothes washed will be avoided.

* * *

CLEAN MIND

There is something more than the body and the clothes. That is the mind. Purity of mind is important. Without that mere cleanliness of body and clothes will be of no use. The mind should be 'cleansed' constantly and kept pure. What is the dirt that covers the mind? The wrongs that we commit. Our actions should not be wrong. That is we should not do anything with a wrong aim.

But once some activity is undertaken even when doing good some wrongs might creep in. That is not a significant blemish. Even when elders engage themselves in doing something good they slip and commit wrong. Such mistakes happen for us to realize that we cannot by ourselves achieve things but that the *Bhagawān*'s grace

is necessary. During such times you have to pray to the Lord. That itself will remove the dirt of the mind.

* * *

UTTERING LIES AND FEAR

But when you commit a wrong how do you feel? It irritates your mind like dirt. Then you feel that the dirt should not be seen by others and you want to hide it. When you have committed a wrong if you pray immediately that dirt will go away, the prayer itself acting like soap. But instead of that if it is attempted to hide the wrong then a lie has to be uttered. If dirt is not washed but allowed to remain it will cause a skin disease. In the same manner if a wrong is covered up by a lie it becomes a disease. The most fearful disease that spoils the mind is telling lies.

Why do we try to hide our wrongs? We do it either because we want others to think that we are good or because we are afraid of someone. The disease of lie shows itself as the disease of fear.

You must have respect and devotion for all elders but meaningless fear should not be there. Fear is a dirt that spoils the mind. Even if a wrong is committed the elders should be told of it with humility but no attempt should be made to hide it by telling a lie. If the wrong is told to elders truthfully they will pardon. Even if they do not pardon but mete out some punishment that too does not matter. They have the right to do so. We have to accept the punishment with courage thinking 'we did a wrong thing; therefore we have received the punishment due for it. Courage, truth etc are like soap and other detergents that remove dirt.

* * *

JEALOUSY

Another big dirt that easily accumulates in children is jealousy. If another boy is better than them in studies or sports or

he is well dressed or he is dropped at the school by a car they immediately become jealous of him. Such jealousy will spoil the mind and lead to various types of quarrels which will affect the studies. Jealousy does not help in any way. It only results in our spoiling our mind ourselves.

There should be the spirit of competition only in one thing. When another boy gets more marks we should make efforts to study hard and get high marks like him. This kind of competition too should not give room for jealousy. It should be so even in sports.

For keeping the body fit and the mind happy all of you must play. Even without my telling you will be interested in play. Hence a little caution is necessary. Such play should not affect your studies. The desire to play should be kept under check so that studies are not affected.

When it is games there will be the desire to defeat the other person or team. Here too competition becomes unavoidable. There is nothing wrong about it. But it should not result in jealousy for the other who wins. We should consider the winner a role model and be friendly to him and he should not be treated as an enemy.

Friendship and brotherhood: To be friendly with all the students will help in keeping the mind pure. In the Lord's family all of us are his children. Therefore we should develop the feeling of the brotherhood more than that of the friendship. There is nothing else that gives greater joy.

Why is another student more capable than us in studies or sports that we want to compete with him? We have several lives. The boy who had done more good than us in the previous life has been blessed more by God. We should not feel jealous of them. Similarly we should not think low of those who are not as comfortably placed as we are or who are not as intelligent or as

good looking. Feeling of pride is a big disease. They may be below us in wealth or intelligence or looks because in the previous life they have committed more wrongs than us. But if we develop pride that itself is a greater wrong than all the wrongs they have committed. The result is that in the next birth we will be far below what they are now.

There are still some more forms of dirt. We should never think of speaking ill of someone or ridicule him in his absence. If we find any mistake in what someone does we should point it out to him with love. But we should not talk about it to others and derive pleasure out of such talk. That would be sheer cowardice. When we talk like this the person about whom we talk may not be there. But the Lord is everywhere. He will mete out punishment some day or the other. No one can escape it.

Cleansing the dirt: Just as soap and other powders remove the dirt on the body, truth, courage and the attitude of give and take are the detergents that remove the dirt of lies, fear, jealousy etc. But even for using soap etc water is required. Similarly the water that helps clean the dirt in the mind is devotion to God. It is our prayer to the Lord which is like a bath in the Ganges.

Right from early years everyone should remain alone for at least five minutes every day and think of God. What cannot be cultivated at an early age cannot be cultivated later. Therefore the good habits of daily prayer must be started right now. First we should think of our parents and the teacher and pray to them. Then we should think of the Lord who is the father of all beings in this world starting from an ant. Just as a daily bath is necessary to keep the body clean, doing prayer is necessary.

* * *

THE LORD'S LOVE AND RULES OF DHARMA

The sun is so big! It is said that the stars are much bigger. How great should be the Lord who has created all these! Such a big one is wanting us, the children, to pray to Him. He only does good to all the beings in the world starting from the worm. How much love He must be having in His heart!

Not only that. Does He do things in a disorderly manner as we all do? There is no one above Him to whom He is answerable. Yet, in what an orderly manner He makes the earth rotate and creates the day and the night! Similarly He makes the earth go round the sun in a year and creates the seasons. He has created order and discipline in everything. We too should have love in our hearts like him. We should be disciplined in what we do. It is this discipline that is called dharma.

If you pray to the Lord who is of the form of love and dharma we too will acquire these. To think of His love and feel grateful to Him is the bath that removes the dirt of our minds.

* * *

PRAY TO BECOME GOOD CHILDREN

It is so easy to get a bad name. But once there is such a stigma what all difficulties and shame we will suffer. It will be difficult to progress in life. It may look that it is difficult to become a good boy but if there is God's grace we can achieve that easily.

You have to hold on to the lotus feet of the Lord and pray : 'I have no other go; you only have to take me on the right path'. The Lord will definitely grant such a prayer coming from tender hearts. To attain purity of mind at a tender age is easy. But if the muck of dirt accumulates even the thought of speaking in the right path will not arise in the mind. Therefore pray to the Lord even from today. He will ensure that no dirt sticks to you and will protect you.

FOR THE YOUNG - 3

ONE WHO IS MOTHER AND FATHER OF THE WORLD:

It is the Lord who conducts this whole world. We humans are in this. So are animals, birds, worms, insects, trees, plants, creepers etc. The family consisting of all of us and these is the world. It is the Lord who conducts the affair of this family. Our small family is managed both by the mother and father. A number of things are needed to run a family and money is required to obtain them. The father goes out earns and brings money with which he purchases the things needed for the family. The mother actually runs the home using these things and does all the work at home.

The Lord is much bigger than us. He is more powerful than us. Therefore he manages the family of the world by himself both as father and mother.

Our father and mother always think of our good, bear all the troubles for the sake of our happiness. The only aim of our parents is that we should grow up as good and intelligent people, should progress well in life. It is because of this aim that sometimes they take us to task. Because of this we should not get angry with them. We should realize that they are strict with us only because they are thinking of our good. Even if they become angry it is because of their love for us. It is because of their love they attend to all our needs, educate us, take care of us when we become sick etc. If we try to see where from such love has come it has come from the Lord only. It is the Lord in the form of the mother and the father who is showing His love to us.

* * *

MOTHER AND FATHER - THE FIRST GOD WE KNOW OF

We should think of the father and the mother as the God. As a reverse of this we should see the Lord in the form of mother and the father.

Avvai the (Tamil) saint poetess says as her first advice to children: 'The mother and the father are the God we know first'. It is only after that she says 'Worship at the temple does so much good'. When we worship at temple we should think of the idol there as our mother and father.

When it is said that the Lord is everywhere He cannot have a form like us. But how to think of one who has no form? Therefore we should think of him in the form of the mother and the father. Of all the people we know it is the father and the mother who show so much love to us. We are happy only if we think of those who love us. Therefore we should think of the Lord as mother and father combined and practice bhakthi to Him. He is *Parvathī* the Mother and *Paramēswara* the Father. He is *Lakshmī* the Mother and *Vishṇu* the Father. He is Sita the mother and Rama the father.

Even when we think of these figures we feel happy. We feel the love.

* * *

FOR THE MIND AND INTELLECT TO BECOME CLEAR

Our buddhi is clear only when there is love and happiness in the mind. If we study when the buddhi is clear we understand the lessons well. When there is anger, sorrow, jealousy etc the buddhi becomes confused. When that happens we are unable to absorb what we study.

Daily for sometime if you think of the Lord as *Parvathī-Paramēswara* or *Mahālakshmi-Mahāvishṇu* the mind will become good, the buddhi will become clear. You will be able to study well and pass creditably.

Even if one is very intelligent and passes with high marks if he does not earn a good name there is no use. If we are good it will

make us happy and make others happy and will help us to progress in life. It is the bhakthi we have for the Lord that will make us good and intelligent.

* * *

BEING OF HELP TO OTHERS

Now all of us are in the shade of a tree*. A plant which was so small some years ago has become the huge tree and is providing to shade to all of us. You who are young today, when you grow up you should help several people like this tree.

(*This is a discourse made under a tree in a school)

If we want to progress well in life it is only for helping others. If we earn a lot and spend the entire thing for ourselves the Lord will not be pleased. Just as we are His children those who are poor, those who are sick, orphans and others are also His children. If we do not help those children and spend all our money on ourselves, the Lord will not bestow His grace on us. Therefore all of you should render to this world whatever help you can. You will have a lot of satisfaction and happiness by doing such help. If you give to a poor person what you eat you will get greater joy. We are born only to help others. If you render to others whatever help you can and make them happy the Lord will be pleased and bestow His grace on you.

If others have a good opinion of you they will also follow you in worshipping the Lord. They will also get the joy and good intellect that comes out of bhakthi. Therefore your being devoted to the Lord becomes a help greater than every other kind of help.

* * *

IN ORDER THAT BAD QUALITIES DO NOT AFFECT

Jealousy, anger etc will show their face now and then. There will be a temptation to indulge in bad acts. But if the mind is allowed to dwell on such things, studies will be spoiled. That is why every day once on getting up in the morning and again before going to sleep, you should pray to the Lord.

Supposing there is a strong gusty wind that is about to topple us, we catch hold of a pillar. In the same manner, when anger and jealousy affect us we should catch hold of the Lord who is the mother and father. He will save us from falling. Therefore right from today, daily pray to the Lord twice. Pray with love : 'I should not fall into bad ways. Guide me on the right path'. By this the mind will become good. Buddhi will become steady, you will be well up in studies, get into a good job and a life of help to all others.

* * *

ARÔHARĀ

In the beginning I spoke about Mother *Parvathī*. Her husband is *Paramēśwara*. He who is *Parvathī* Pathe is the father of the whole world. Since He is great God He is also called *Mahādēvā*. A child like you was worshipping him by continuously reciting the name Hara Hara : That child was *Jnānasambandhar*. People saw this child going from place to place calling out Hara Hara and they too started raising 'Arôharā'. Whatever was bad in those times was driven away by that sound. The world was rid of its suffering. The child Sambandhar sang *Thēvāram* so that Hara Hara sound will be raised permanently and the world will be free from trouble.

Now I will say 'Namah *Parvathī Pathayē*'. You should all think of Mother *Parvathī* and Her husband and our Father *Paramēśwara* and say with devotion 'Hara Hara *Mahādēvā*'.

Namah Parvathī Pathayē
Hara Hara *Mahādēvā*

FOR ADULT STUDENTS

Youth is the stage in life when emotions tend to go beyond limits. So the youth who are in colleges are naturally victims of emotion. Added to this are politics, cinema, newspapers, sports etc which add to such an emotion. Therefore it is doubly difficult for the students who remain disciplined. But keeping their future in view they have to cope up with this. The peace of the country now and in the future depends on this. If the youth lose discipline and self control they will be spoiled, peace at home will be destroyed and lack of peace in the country will affect its very roots.

It is only to keep the emotions under check during youth our ancient had taught humility and devotion to the guru and God right from the time they started learning alphabets.

* * *

BHAKTHI IS ESSENTIAL

Although the old gurukula system is no more in vogue there is no other way except bhakthi and humility to keep emotions under check and protect the youth. Bhakthi to God, respect to parents and the teachers are very essential for students.

To pray to God everyday for fifteen to thirty minutes both in the morning and evening, going to temple regularly, listening to the stories of holy men and women, reading books connected with divinity - all these will do good. Here too I have cautiously said fifteen to thirty minutes because for students studies are important. They have to concentrate more on that. Basically if all the students have firm faith in God and if it is in their mind that God alone should lead them on the right path allotting time for prayer is only secondary. Those who are well up in studies may be able to spend more time for prayer and those who are not so

may have to spend more time for their studies and less for prayer.

Even when saying that, during periods of study one need not spend too much time on god related matters it will be necessary to emphasise that if there is no involvement in matters relating to god proper growth of the mind will be affected. If thought of god and following the rules of dharma which flow from it are not there human life itself is a waste.

* * *

FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD CONDUCT

The reason why this subject is being brought up is that unfortunately in the present scheme of education rightful place has not been accorded to belief in god and teaching of ethical values that go with it. If these have found a place in the curriculum students need not have to spend extra time for these. Since without this no education has any value students have to earn these during extra hours only. Students should make it a point to learn these during weekly holidays and vacations.

Sangams should be organized everywhere to enable them to have religious teaching and teaching of morals. The elders in different segments should come together to engage themselves in this important task and organize sangams. This is an important work to make our young men grow as noble men and women. Young people must make full use of the same.

* * *

POLITICS - NEVER

Earlier I have mentioned about politics, cinema, newspapers, sports. Of these students should not at all take to

politics. It may be said that the country's affairs are based on politics. Even so to conduct the affairs of the country in an intelligent way, education is a must. To get into political activities which obstruct education will only aggravate emotion and end in spoiling oneself. This is because honest people and honest policies are becoming rare and politics is only a fertile field for selfish ends and mutual recrimination. In this situation if youth who have not attained maturity jump into it what will happen?

Even if politics is different from what it is and is conducted on the lines of dharma there is an appropriate time for it and therefore students who have to complete their education, take up a job and the responsibility of life should not jump into the political fray.

The duty to be performed during the period of education is only learning. Indulging in political activities to the detriment of education will cause harm now and in the future and will have adverse effect on the conduct of national affairs.

The learning during the period of education and bhakthi and humility which are observed to check the force of emotion will only make the youth good citizens committed to the ways of dharma. The youth must realize : 'We should first of all acquire the power of knowledge, the strength of dharma and the aid of the divine power for conducting the national affairs on right lines. Only if we strengthen ourselves in all these respects we will be able to carry the load of national problems with ease. Therefore at a stage when we have not acquired these strengths to engage in political activities is not good for us and the country'.

Of these, one has to gain the intellectual power through education in college. Moreover the situation is that it is only with that we can take up a job and manage the home. If education is affected one will not be able to manage his own home. How can such a person manage the affairs of the country?

Politicians will think of their own interest and try to draw the students to their side. School managements and the elders at home should keep advising the students and see that they do not become victims of such pulls. This advice should be given to students in a manner that they do not get bored of it. The teachers have a role here, a great service to perform. The big leaders in the countries also should do necessary propaganda and create awakening among students.

* * *

SERVICE WITHOUT HINDRANCE TO STUDIES

In all educational institutions extra curricular activities are a part of education. Service to the society and the country could be rendered by students within the ambit of extra curricular activities without hindrance to studies. It will be good for the students to confine themselves to such services as are rendered under the auspices of their educational institutions. It is not necessary for them to engage themselves in public activities beyond this. If they have spare time after studies they can go for service through other institutions with the permission of parents. What is important is that studies should not be affected.

Here educational institutions also should be careful. Since public activities can get a name to the institution they should not give room for too much of such activity by which those who lag behind in studies will not be able to improve. Students should be grouped according to their capability in studies and they should be allowed to engage in public activities only according to what they are capable of. But even while rendering service to others they should completely avoid any connection with political parties.

* * *

CINEMA, DRUGS, NEWSPAPERS, NARCOTICS

Except documentaries which are educative, cinema is to be totally avoided. My view is that it is also like politics. From what I hear of present day cinema I cannot have a different view. But for anyone if there is no pleasant relaxation life will become suffocating. In this age of freedom this point cannot be ignored. Therefore I shall relax my view a little and say that the students may once in a way see a picture which is known to be of good quality among what is available.

What I said about cinema also applies to other forms of relaxation. Since dance, music and drama have been there all along I make a big concession and say that they may attend these performances within limits. The danger in this is that once you take to these they become addictive.

I spoke of narcotics. Starting from coffee and cigarette there are many. Students should not take them at all. There is no scope here for me to relax as I did in the case of cinema etc. Students should not go near coffee, cigarette and other things which I do not like to mention*.

(*This was said at a time when use of drugs had not spread in a big way)

The next thing that exerts a pull is newspaper/magazine. It appears that these days many of the papers whip up feelings and emotions. Newspapers and magazines can present a lot of things relating to spirituality, culture, the good of the world and for improving our knowledge etc. But it appears that the reality is different. When this is so it will be difficult for the students to choose what is good and do selective reading. Because it is difficult it should not be given up. I am aware that it is easy to say a thing but it is difficult to do it. But since students have to do well in their studies and become good citizens of the world this difficulty has to

be managed and therefore I say this. In fact when I see how they are being pulled in different directions I feel pity for them. I pray to the Lord.

Finally I come to sports. This, it appears, to be the foremost concern of the students now. Play and sports are indeed necessary for students. To improve stamina, to relax and enjoy and to develop team spirit and a certain discipline sports do help. Anything done in excess is bad. It appears that it has become the case with sports.

People talk of a sense of proportion. This should be kept in mind and daily half an hour or one hour can be spent on sports. But it should not become a whole time affair.

These days youth spend time not in playing games but in witnessing matches and spending still more time on commentaries and reading the sports column of papers. * When I hear that they spend hours together like this daily, I feel that it is not a sign of intelligence that they do this when they have to study so much for their examination. I feel that our students should not get such a name.

(* This was said before the advent of T.V.)

* * *

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF OLDEN TIMES

On the whole these days youth has become a stage in which there is the conflict of opposing forces. This is the stage in which there is vigor and enthusiasm. But this is also the stage when a lot of self control and discipline is necessary. In olden times boys went to gurukulam even at the age of eight. They grew up in the gurukulam where there was very little freedom combined with greater strictness, with the result that when they grew up control

and discipline came naturally to them. But these days even during the stage of foundation, in one's own home, youngsters grow up with a lot of freedom and without any control or discipline. This is reflected in the educational institutions also.

This happens because of the difference between a gurukulam and home. In one's home parents are generally pampering their children. Because of their love they are not strict. It was different in the gurukulam. Guru used to show his love to the extent necessary but otherwise he was strict. When there is no control at home and control is attempted in the educational institutions youngsters tend to revolt.

* * *

DISCIPLINE IS NEEDED

What is the use of talking about gurukula system now? It will amount to dreaming about something which is impossible. But something needs to be done to deal with the freedom that the youth have in the absence of gurukula system. But if they are to be subjugated in the manner of animals it is not respectable to them. As human beings they have to subject themselves to self control. If the youth have the keenness that they should not get wasted instead of growing up as good human beings they will submit themselves to control. How to create in them this keenness? It is the elders who have to keep telling them continuously and with love. They too should live a disciplined life. Otherwise their advice will be of no use. Young people who have developed strong notions of generation gap will not listen. Even if they are not conscious of such gap the modern thinkers and psychologists create this feeling in them. It appears that there is a big question mark about the elders of these days following a disciplined life themselves. What value will their words have? At least in the interest of the younger generations the elders must begin following a disciplined life.

SELF CONTROL IS ITSELF A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT

For the youth to bring themselves under discipline and control will be respectable for them instead of being disciplined by others. In today's situation if they become examples to elders that will be a creditable achievement. The young are keen about adventure. At least some of them should take up this adventure and make others follow them. This is my desire. For this I pray to *Ānjanēyaswāmi* more than whom there is no one learned, no one who performed courageous feats and no one who has humility combined with bhakthi.

It may appear that I am wishing for something impossible to happen. One may wonder how self control can be expected from the youth when that is not possible for the elders. I do not expect that all young people will become like that. I expect seven or eight out of a hundred to become like that. Although what I say may appear strange it is the elders who have got used to indiscipline over a long period who cannot come out of it. The youth are not like that. Once they decide to do a thing they have the ability to achieve it. If seven or eight percent of them do it, I think that is enough. Unlike the older people the youth are dynamic and they will be able to influence others and draw them to their ways of discipline. That is what I believe.

* * *

A NEW TYPE OF STUDENTS UNION

These days students have unions and they fight for their rights. Instead of that they should form a union which will ensure for them the true right to elevate themselves as great men. If in each college seven or eight good boys can come together for this they will be able to persuade others and form such a union. At a age when they come forward to do things with a confidence in their

ability if a few of them take up this task with humility the whole scene will change and it will become a golden age.

When feelings and emotions take hold like a disease education is a remedy for it. Education should be such that it develops not just brain power but makes persons perfect. When medicines are administered there are always strict regulations regarding food etc. In fact such regulations help more in the cure than the medicine itself. Humility and simplicity have been prescribed as the regulations for taking the medicine of education. *Vidhyā* and *Vinayam* (Learning and humility) are like the two eyes of the youth.

If we are humble now we can rise in the status later. The example of the dust on the feet is usually given. It is under our feet as small particles. Suddenly it goes up due to wind and rises above our head. This truth must be realized by our youth who are the inheritors of our great culture and civilization.

* * *

DEVELOP THE GOOD AND CURTAIL THE BAD

In the world there will be good as well as bad. This has been so from the time of creation. The Lord has allowed bad things also to prevail here so that in the end we will realize 'this worldly life is not true including what appears to be good. What is beyond this world and beyond *māyā* is only true. Our goal should be to go from here to that true state'.

This world of ours is called '*Miśra lōkam*', that is things in it are mixed - a mixture of the good and the bad. In *Dēvā lōkam* everything is good. In *Asura lōkam* everything is bad. In this world of humans the two are mixed. That is the rule laid down by *Īśwara*. But if bad things become dominant we will get sunk in them and we will not be able to achieve the goal of reaching the true state. This

should not be allowed to happen. In earlier ages (yugas) also the good and bad were mixed but there was preponderance of the good in Krutha *Thrēthā* and *Dwāpara* yugas. Even if the good was not too much on the high side at least the good and bad were equal. *Śāsthrās* say that in Kali the situation will change and the bad will become more than good. But this does not mean that it will be entirely bad and the good will get wiped out completely. If that happens the name of this world that it is '*Mīśra*' will become false and it will become Asura *lōkam*. Moreover in the same *śāsthrās* remedies have been prescribed for the evils of Kali. It only shows that good has at least a forty percent space for itself. We should not allow this level of good go down further. For this we should nurture what is good and cut down what is bad. It is true that the bad cannot be reduced to zero level. But it has to be reduced to the extent that it does not overpower good.

This is an issue of general concern and I have spoken about this with particular reference to the youth. It does not mean that I expect that the whole thing will be reformed and I ask for it. I have spoken whatever is within my knowledge in order that things can be corrected to the extent possible.

My view is that the stuff of which our youth is made is of high quality. Just as verdigris covers good metal undesirable aspects have caught hold of them. If dirt has to be removed and made clean this has to be done by the elders and also by the youth themselves. There is definitely place for good in the world; people - the elders and the youth together - have to ensure this. More than all this the Lord's grace should make it possible.

* * *

GŌ SAMRAKSHANĀM (COW PROTECTION)

The cow as mother : The cow belongs to the species which cannot speak. Yet, it cries out from the depth of its being '*ammā*'.

The cow that cries out *ammā* is for us like the mother. What is the outstanding quality of the mother? She gives milk. When we were children our mother gave us milk and protected us. The cow also gave us milk even at that stage and protected us. Mother giving the milk ended with our childhood. But even after we have become old the cow gives us milk and all that comes from it namely curd, buttermilk, ghee. Even in our advanced age when we can take only very little of all other food the cow's milk serves as the life giving food. If our mother gives milk only for a short period of our life the cow gives milk throughout our life. That is why we associate the cow with the greatest of relationships namely mother and we call it '*Gōmāthā*'.

Everyone knows that the word '*Gō*' (Sanskrit) means the cow. The word cow is also derived from '*Gō*'. From time immemorial the cow has been considered mother and great love has been shown to her. Even if we look at a cow which is a picture of love and peace we will get the feeling of seeing our mother. The mother who gives birth to the child is called '*Janaka Māthā*'. *Gōmāthā* is among other mothers like *Bhūmāthā* and *Srīmāthā*.

* * *

GŌMĀTHĀ AND BHŪMĀTHĀ

Just as the real mother and *Gōmāthā* give milk the earth produces grains, metals etc and more than anything else gives water. That is why the earth is called *Bhūmāthā*. Our ancestors perceived motherhood in cow and the earth which appears inert and called them *Gōmāthā* and *Bhūmāthā*. It also happened that *Bhūmāthā* herself took the form of *Gōmāthā*. It was the time when *Dwāpara* Yuga was about to end and just before *Kali* was to begin. When the cruelties inflicted by asuras became too much *Bhūmāthā* could not bear it. At such a time *Bhūmāthā* along with *Brahma* went to *Mahāvishṇu* and prayed to Him and as a result *Mahāvishṇu*

took *avathār* as Krishna. The *purāṇās* say that *Bhūmāthā* took the form of *Gōmāthā* and went to *Vishṇu* because she thought that it would be possible to move the heart of *Mahāvishṇu* and make him come down for protection only if she went to him not as his wife, *Bhūmāthā*, but in the form of *Gōmāthā* who enjoyed greater love and sympathy. In accordance with that the Lord came as *Gōpāla* and moved closely with cows.

‘*Gō*’ also means the earth. Krishna was a ‘*Pūrṇā Avathāram*’. *Bhagawān* has also taken *avathārs* by showing only one of his aspects. According to *Bhāgavatham*, *Bhagawān* had taken twenty four *avathārs*. Of these, other than the ten *avathārs* (*Daśāvathāram*) which all of us know, the remaining fourteen are *avathārs* of one or the other of the aspects (*amśa*). One such ‘*amśa avathār*’ was Brudhu Chakravarthi. He was the one who had organized the state, towns etc. In *Bhāgavatham* it is said that he saw *Bhūmāthā* in the form of *Gōmāthā* and made everyone receive from her the wealth that each wanted making use of his *swadharma* as the calf.

I have said this to show what great love *Bhagawān* had for the form of cow. Similarly, the cows also had great love for *Bhagawān*. When *Bhagawān* as *Vēṇugōpāla* was keeping his left foot in the vertical position a cow would be licking the lotus like bottom of that foot. This could be seen in paintings.

* * *

SRĪMĀTHĀ AND GŌMĀTHĀ

Just as there are *Gōmāthā*, *Bhūmāthā* and *Janakamāthā* there is also *Srīmāthā* who is a mother. The *Parāśakthi* who is the very life of all the other three mothers as well as all the sentient and insentient things in the world is *Srīmāthā*. It is by the milk of grace that flows from her that the *Janakamāthā* and *Gōmāthā* are able to

give milk. It is by that grace too that *Bhūmāthā* gives the wealth of water and grains.

In *Lalithā Sahasranāmam* *Gōmāthā* has been mentioned as a name for *Srīmāthā*. The very first name in *Sahasranāmam* is *Srīmāthā*. In the '*Nāmāvalī*' (the row of names) the names *Gurumūrthih* and *Guṇānidhih* occur. In the *Sthala purāṇa* of *Thērazhundur* (*Thanjāvūr* District, Tamilnadu) it is said that *Ambāl* the *Srīmāthā* had actually come there as *Gōmāthā*. There is also a story which combines in it five or six *Sthala purāṇas* according to which *Ambāl*'s brother *Mahā Vishṇu* later came there as *Gōpālākṛishna*, protected her when she was in the form of a cow and gave her in marriage to *Paramēswara*, the *Paśupathi*.

* * *

GLORY - BOTH IN PRACTICAL TERMS AND SPIRITUALLY

The cow which gives the most nutritious milk and other things gives greater benefits in spiritual terms (in *Vaidhikam*). Divinity, spirituality etc are all *Vaidhikam* - what has come to us from the *Vēdhās*.

What can be perceived by the senses and proved scientifically is earthly, secular (*lowkikam*). But that which is not so but does good to the soul is *Vaidhikam*. The glory of the cow is seen in both.

* * *

COW'S MILK : WHOLESOME FOOD, IMPROVES SATHVA GUṆA

In practical terms it is only cow's milk which is a wholesome food. Usually, such a nutritious food will not be easily digested. But cow's milk can be easily digested even by a small child and also by old people. It is also a food for the sick and the very weak.

Looking at it in terms of Vaidhikam cow's milk has the quality to improve sathva *guṇa*. This need not be accepted merely on the basis of faith. This will be clear if we look at *sādhus* who take only milk for their food and or so *sāthvik* in nature.

Before the name *Gōmāthā* for *Ambāl* the name *Gurumūrthih* and *Guṇanidhih* occur. The power of food is among those which helps a person to evolve into a *Gurumūrthih*, *Guṇanidhih*. Milk is such a pure food.

There is something funny in this. Usually the food that we get from the animal kingdom will affect sathva *guṇa* and increase *rājasa* and *thāmasa guṇas*. Sathvam - *sāthvikam* means the mind being clear and being peaceful and at the same time remaining alert and not feeling tired or sleepy. *Rājasa* or *rājasam* is being affected by desire, anger etc and being in an agitated state. *Thāmasam* means having no enthusiasm for anything, feeling exhausted and sleepy and dull. In such a dull stage noble attitude will not develop but desire and anger will keep coming up. Sathva alone is pure. Cow's milk though coming from an animal and is almost like its blood should normally affect the development of sathva *guṇa* and it also looks like being opposed to ahimsa food. But our *sāsthrās* have allowed cow's milk as food for the *sanyāsi* whose greatest dharma is ahimsa and who must have *sāthvik guṇa* till the mind and *guṇa* are destroyed. If the cow has something which creates such purity should it not be greatly divine?

* * *

WHERE THERE IS UNIVERSAL LOVE

The food of a *sanyāsi* has two aspects. One is that it should improve *sāthvik* quality and the other is that it should have been obtained without causing any harm to any other being. Cow's milk satisfies both these requirements. In God's creation it has been

created as the dwelling place of universal love. That is why among the *māmmals* it is only the cow, which produces more milk than what is needed for its calf and gives the excess to us. If a calf sucks the entire milk that a cow has it will upset its health. What is clear from this is that it is the intention of the Lord that although the cow gives out milk only when its calf is near it should also be mother to human beings and gives them milk. It is that love of a mother which has given the cow the high status not given to any other animal. The status is so high as to be considered divine.

The cow is God. Although she is an animal she is *Gōmāthā* who gives milk like a mother and is the form of *Srīmāthā*. As *Kāmadēnu* she is the divine mother who gives all that is desired. *Kāmadēnu* manifested from the Ocean of Milk (*Kshīrābdhi*). It was *Srīmāthā* who came as *Gōmāthā*. This is how Mūka prays to *Kāmākshi* in his *Panchaśathī* :

May you be our *Kāmadēnu*

Kāmadhugā bhava Kamalē Kāmakalē Kāmakōti Kāmākshi

* * *

EVEN THE COW'S DUNG IS PURE

What appear to be opposites come together in the cow. I have said that its milk which is like its blood instead of spoiling the mind purifies it. What gives energy to the body also gives purity to the mind. More than all these, its dung which is actually its excreta also purifies. It purifies both the body and the mind. Usually any excreta is dirty, foul smelling and capable of spreading disease. But the cow's excreta is capable of removing all other dirt and killing disease causing bacteria. It has no foul smell. In fact it has a kind of healthy smell.

There are several proofs to show how holy the cow dung is considered. There are *sādhus* who strictly follow the rule that the

sanyāsi should not have any connection with fire. They will not take any food that is cooked on fire. But a section of *sanyāsis* follow the custom of taking food cooked entirely by using cow dung cakes. It is because of the cow's divinity its dung too enjoys such greatness.

* * *

THE EXAMPLE OF BHOPAL

Those considered educated used to say that it is only people who believe in *sāsthṛās* are, out of blind faith, thinking that the cow dung purifies. But now the purifying quality of cow dung has been accepted scientifically. The scientists of atheistic Russia have conducted experiments and found out that the smoke emitted by the burning cow dung cake acts as a disinfectant and anti-pollutant. Recently* we saw something wonderful reported in the papers.

(* This was said in 1984)

In the catastrophic gas leakage accident that occurred in Bhopal people in the entire town were affected in various ways and many people died. The news report says that in a particular home which was full of the smoke generated by the performance of *Agnihōthram* no harm was caused.

But in this it will not be correct to give the entire credit to the cow dung only. Although the dung is a good anti-pollutant which can counter poison, greater importance here is only to the *Agnihōthram* performed with manthras and using the dung cake. More than the power of the dung it is the mantra which must have nullified the effect of the poisonous gas. But when a mantra is not recited as a *japā* but is connected with the performance of yajna the materials used in the yajna according to *sāsthṛās* add to the power of the *manthrās* and give full benefit. Looked at this way it

would mean that the cow dung also had a share in countering the effect of the poisonous gas.

The power of purification which the dung has when used in yajnas also protects the *manthrās* and increases their potency. It is laid down that only the cow dung is to be used as a purifying agent in yajnas and not any other material.

* * *

PANCHAGAVYAM

What is more important about the cow dung is that more than being an external purifying agent it acts as an internal purifying agent in the Vaidhic way. *Śāsthrās* have laid down that the cow dung is to be added to the panchagavyam which is to be taken for internal purification.

What is panchagavyam? 'Gavyam' is what is connected with the cow (*gō*). Three of these are milk and the milk products namely curd and ghee. The remaining two - it is here the opposites come - are the cow's urine and its dung. These five mixed together make the panchagavyam. '*Kshiram, dadhi, thathā sājyam, mūthram, gōmayam ēvacha*', it is said. When *puṇyāhavāchanam* is performed to remove the ritual impurity caused by any reason panchagavyam is given and it should be taken in. The use of panchagavyam is not merely to remove the external ritual impurity but to remove the internal impurity and the previous sins. This is not a simple matter. The sinful acts are the cause of our birth and suffering. If these are destroyed is it not a big thing? If the cow gives the five things required for this is there anyone more helpful than the cow. *Śāsthrās* say that when taking the panchagavyam one has to say, 'just as fire reduces wood to ashes, may this panchagavyam which I take reduce to ashes the sins that have spread from the skin to the bones'.

*Yath thvak asthi gatham pāpam dhēhē thishtathi māmakē
Prāśanam panchagavyasya dhahathvagnirivendhanam*

‘*Īndhānam*’ means firewood. The meaning of ‘*dhahadh agnih ēva īndhānam*’ is ‘just as fire burns out the wood, let this panchagavyam burn the sins’. Four great qualities of milk, curd, buttermilk, butter and ghee are : they are tasty, nutritious, not only serve as food but act as medicine and are useful for Vaidhic purposes and remove the sins and save the *āthmā*.

* * *

IN MEDICAL TREATMENT AND IN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Just as in *Puṇyāhavāchanam*, it is said that Panchagavyam cures diseases from the skin to the bone. In Vaidya *Sāsthrā* also it has been so stated and we see that as a medicine it has good effect. It is to be noted that the allopathic system also supports what is said in *Āyurvēdhā*, namely, that milk helps in curing the skin disease of leprosy and that it contains calcium which strengthens the bone. In the *Āyurvēdhic* system, many medicines are to be taken along with milk. Curd, buttermilk and butter and ghee also have curative properties.

The cow is useful even in music also. Leather instruments like mrudangam, drum etc are made of leather.

* * *

CRUELTY TO THE COW IS LIKE KILLING THE MOTHER

What is said above namely the use of leather in musical instruments means leather taken from cows which die a natural death. Killing of cows (*gō hathi*) is a great sin not to be thought of even in dreams. Not killing but even small cruelty caused to a cow is sin. We have seen that ‘*gō*’ is mother. Therefore killing of the

cow is like killing the mother, a sin for which there is no remedy (*prāyaschiththam*). I started speaking about the cow only to highlight this point.

If we enjoy the milk from the cow as long as it gives milk and then send it away for slaughter once it stops yielding milk it is like killing the mother who has become old and cannot do any work. The meat of a cow is the same as the meat of a mother.

Since music is divine it is necessary to play musical instrument in temples. But for that purpose if a cow is to be killed the Lord will never forgive such acts. It is only the skin of a cow, which dies a natural death that can be used for making musical instruments.

It is the same in respect of '*gōrōchan*' which is in the cow's stomach. It is true that it is offered as incense during *pūjā*. It is also used in medicine. But the cow should not be harmed just for getting the *gōrōchan*. The skin or *gōrōchan* should be taken only from a cow that dies a natural death.

* * *

THE COW'S HORN IS SOMETHING SPECIAL

Since the cow is holy even the *gōrōchana* that is taken from inside its body becomes fit for being offered to the Lord in *pūjā*. Many people know that in the sannidhi where *Natarājā* dances *Nandikēswara* plays the mrudangam. But there is something more special than that. *Abhishēkam* (holy bath) being performed to *Īswara* through the horn of a cow has been said to be something special. It is said to be great *puṇya* if milk *abhishēkam* is performed to *Śivalinga* through the hole of a *gōsringam* (horn) for the duration of reciting Rudram - Chamakam once. Is it not appropriate that *abhishēkam* is performed through *gōsringam* to one who is seated on the bull?

If the cow gives milk it is the bull that is useful in ploughing and raising crops. Thus it is the cattle that render great help to the humans. We have to show gratitude and devotion to them in a big way. We have to think that even a little harm caused to them is an offence committed against God.

Apart from *abhishēkam* done through the horn all the five materials used in Panchagavyam are used for the *abhishēkam* of the Lord.

* * *

ABHISHĒKAM WITH GHEE

We know only the *abhishēkam* done with milk. We have not heard much about *abhishēkam* with ghee. In Trichur (Kerala) the *abhishēkam* is done with ghee only. The Lingam there will be covered with ghee like snow in the Himalayas. It does not become bad even after a long gap of time. Not only that, the older it is the more it is useful for medicinal purposes. The Vaidis in Kerala administer as medicine the old ghee itself as 'Purathana krutham'.

Apart from milk, curd and ghee doing *abhishēkam* with the cow's urine or dung is not in practice. But it is considered special to do *abhishēkam* with Panchagavyam.

* * *

VIBHŪTHI

Paramēswara who is fond of *abhishēkam* is also fond of *vibhūthi*. What the Lord wears is the ash of the burnt corpse. But the *vibhūthi* that we make, apply to him, do *abhishēkam* also and we wear - where from does it come? It is by burning balls of the cow dung that it is made. There is nothing more sacred than *vibhūthi*. In the *Basmajāpālōpanishad* *Paramēswara* himself

explains in detail how *vibhūthi* is to be made and says that it removes all sins and gives *mōksha*. The cow's dung has got such pure *Śakthi*. *Vaishṇavas* too wear with manthra the ash that gets generated in *hōmas*. In that the ash of samid will be mixed with that of cow dung.

There are two ways of purification : One is to take bath and another is to apply *vibhūthi* over the body. We perform *abhishēkam* to the Lord with *vibhūthi*. It is basically *abhishēkam* with cow dung.

* * *

THE DUST RISING FROM THE COW'S HOOF

Just as the cow's dung is sacred the dust rising from its hoof is also sacred. Usually dust from the feet is considered something lowly. But we accept the same with bhakthi from divine personages. The dust from the cow's feet is also sacred. When the cows return as a herd after grazing they raise a cloud of dust. If we stand at a place where such dust falls on our body it is said to be a bath which is holier than a bath in holy water. Normally, we take bath to remove the dirt on our body. But here dust itself becomes holy bath! Young Krishna had immersed himself in such dust. His body being covered all the time with dust enhanced his appearance. *Āchāryā* himself has sung : '*Śaśwath Gōkura Nirdhūdhōththadha dhūlī dhūsara sowbhāgyam*'. (*Govindāshatakam*). The evening time when the cows return home as a herd raising dust is considered special and is described as '*Gōdhūlī lagnam*'.

* * *

NO YAJNA WITHOUT THE COW

Abhishekam is part of devotional worship. *Āgamas* and *puraṇās* are the authority for the same. More than all that the basic authority for our religion are the *Vēdhās*. Without the support of the *Vēdhās*, *āgamas* and *puraṇās* cannot have a status of being the authority.

If it is thought that *Vēdhās* are meant only for our country there cannot be a greater mistake. *Vēdhās* are recited only in our country and only if *Vēdha karmās* are performed here in Bharath (which is *karmabhūmi*) they are fruitful. But the fruit is not only for this country. We do Vaidhika *karmās* here keeping in mind the good of the entire world. Just as the blood flows from the heart to all parts of the body the Vaidhika *anushtānās* we observe here bestow welfare on the whole world. In other words the world will be there only if the *Vēdhās* are there. The welfare of the world depends on the yajnas and other Vaidhika *karmās* done here. There need be no doubt about it. Yajnas give life to the whole world. Two things are very necessary for the same. One is the person who performs the yajnam (yajamanan) and the other is the cow that gives the important materials to be used in the yajna.

The important '*āhuthi*' offered in yajna is the cow's ghee. All the things that are offered in yajnam have the common name 'havis'. But 'havis' particularly means the cow's ghee. Even the other things are offered only after cleaning them with ghee. In *agnihōthram* and other yajnas cow's milk is offered in the *hōmam*. Curd also is used in *hōma*. If ghee, milk and curd become *hōma* themselves in the fire it is the cow dung cake that keeps the fire glowing. Therefore if there is no cow there will be no yajna.

* * *

PROTECTING THE COW IS PROTECTING THE WORLD

Vēdhās are the backbone for the welfare of the world. Yajna is the backbone of the *Vēdhās*. The *karthā* who performs the yajna and the cow which yields the important materials for the yajna are the backbone of the yajna. Therefore it means that the cow is there for the welfare of the world. That is why it is said '*Gō rakshanam is Bhūrakshanam*'. It is for this reason that when prayer is offered for the welfare of the world the cow and the *karthā* (who performs yajna) are first mentioned separately and then prayer is said for the welfare of the world.

Gō brāhmaṇēbyō subamasthu nithyam

Lōkāh samasthāh sukinō bhavanthu

The reason why the cow and the Brahmin have been mentioned separately when there are so many animals and there are so many *jāthis* is that the two are most useful in yajnas which are performed for the welfare of the world. This was not said out of any feeling of partiality. These lines are from the first of the '*Mangala ślokas*' recited at the conclusion of *Ramayana Pārāyaṇam*. Since the *śloka* comes at the end of the recitation of *Ramāyāna* which is the story of Ramachandramurthi who ruled his kingdom in accordance with *Vēdhās*, performing *Asvamēdha* yajna etc first it is said that the king should rule justly and then the welfare of the cow, the Brahmin and the world has been mentioned.

Swasthi prajābyah paripālayanthām

Nyāyyēna mārgeṇa mahīm mahīśah

Gō brāhmaṇēbyō subhamasthu nithyam

Lōkāh samasthāh sukinō bhavanthu

Rama and Krishna are the two eyes of this country. When praying to *Krishna Paramāthmā* for the welfare of the world before

mentioning the good of the world the welfare of the cow and Brahmin are mentioned.

*Namō brahmaṇya dēvāya gō brāhmaṇa hithāya cha
Jagadh hithāya Kṛishṇāya gōvindāya namō Namah*

Although the two are the pillars of yajnas the cow has been given the first place and then the Brahmin - 'go brahmana'.

The Brahmins are called '*Bhūdēvās*', they are the *dēvās* who are not in *dēvalōka* but are in *bhuloka*. Those Brahmins who have dedicated themselves to the *Vēdhās* and are doing yajnas and other *anushtānās* for the welfare of the world are referred to like this, not the present day Brahmins who have given up the swadharma. The cow is mentioned before such true Brahmins who are *bhūdēvās*. It is said of someone that he not only spoiled himself but spoiled the holy temple tank. Similarly since the Brahmin has given up the swadharma of *Vēdha* rakshanam and therefore yajnas and *hōmas* have declined the virtuous function of the cow (of giving its ghee, dung etc) has been affected.

The cow which protects the yajnas by giving the important materials needed for the same has the power to protect the efficacy of the *manthrās* by its mere presence. That is why it is said that doing *japā* inside a cow shed yields crores of times the benefit that normally accrues. There is no place as pure as a '*kōshtam*', the cattle shed. This is because all the 33 crores of *dēvās* are within a cow. All the holy waters are within it. In our temples there are sannidhis for different deities and there is a holy tank. But the cow is a temple in which all the deities and all the holy waters are there.

* * *

GOMĀTHĀ AND LAKSHMĪ

If it is said that the cow is the embodiment of all the *dēvathās* it is not possible for our little mind to comprehend it. We only

wonder at it and it is a wonder tinged with fear. Therefore it is not such as will make us practice devotion to it. That is why *Gōmāthā* is particularly referred to as one *dēvathā* namely *Lakshmī*. In *Amarakōṣam* where the several names are given for *Lakshmī* the names *Lōkamāthā* and *Lōkajanani* occur. *Gōmāthā* is that *Lōkamāthā*.

On the one side *Gōmāthā* is called *Lakshmī*. On the other she is said to be one of the abodes of *Lakshmī*. *Lakshmī*'s abodes are five : The *sīmantha* (central parting of the hair on the head) of a sumangali, the interior of a fully blossomed lotus flower, the forehead of the elephant, the rear part of the bilva leaf and the hind part of the cow. We have already seen that opposites come together in a cow. Similarly *Lakshmī* does not reside in the face of the cow but in the rear part. While we may decorate the cow by applying sandal paste, kumkum etc on the face and putting garland around its neck, when it comes to worship we have to decorate the hind part and do *archanā*. There is nothing lowly about the cow. Everything about it is great. From the fact that in the dharma *pītās* like our Mutt early in the morning '*Gōpūjā*' is done the high status enjoyed by the cow can be understood. Although the elephant is much bigger than the cow the *pūjā* for the elephant (*Gajapūjā*) is done only after the *Gōpūjā*.

A bunch of grass for the cow: Only some people can do *pūjā* to the cow treating it as divine. But there is a duty which has to be performed by everyone - giving fodder to the cow. Everyday we have to give at least a handful of grass to the cow. *Śāsthṛās* refer to this as '*gōgrāsam*'. '*Grāsam*' means a mouthful of food. It is from *gōgrāsam* that the English word 'grass' has been derived. In his *Thirumandhiram*, *Thirumūlar* has mentioned the duty of giving '*gōgrāsam*' in between the duty of offering a leaf (bilva) to *Īswara* and giving alms.

* * *

UNPARDONABLE CRIME

Whether during the period the cow yields milk or when it stops yielding milk if we do not give sufficient food to the cow it is a great blemish on us. All of us are criminals in this respect. Our negligence here is unpardonable.

If we keep side by side our cow and the cow of other countries where it is not being given a status of divinity we will feel ashamed. People of other countries, though they do not treat the cow as divine and though they may be eating its meat, they feed it well and keep it healthy. But we give it minimum food just to get milk from it. We cannot escape by saying that in other countries the cows are fattened just for that meat. Whatever may be the reason so long as the cow is alive they feed it well. Without taking measures to feed the cow well and protect it there is no use of our shouting that cow slaughter should be prevented by law. Those who support cow slaughter point to the lean and emaciated cows that we keep and say that instead of keeping them like this it is better to kill them as a relief to them. We are unable to counter this argument.

* * *

THE DUTY OF THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE

By what is said above it should not be concluded that a legal ban on cow slaughter is not required. A law banning cow slaughter has to be passed as soon as possible but instead of the matter ending with that there is the duty of the people. It is to feed the cow well and provide for them sheds which are hygienic. For a long time now many people have been pressing for a law to ban cow slaughter and have been even agitating for it. But they have not taken any special steps to ensure what needs to be done by the people to protect the cow. In this matter, I myself have not done my duty well. It is only to point out our duty I have said that what

the other side says is not without justification. On the whole a law passed by the government is necessary. I wanted to emphasise that to the same extent people should treat the cows well till they die a natural death.

On the one hand we are religionists who worship the cow as a deity. On the other hand we are making available for slaughter cows which have stopped yielding milk or we starve them. This hypocrisy is a great blemish on us. Till such time we do not protect the cows well until its natural death we are unfit to call ourselves Hindus.

* * *

EASY WAY TO FEED A COW

It is not necessary that all of us should do some great sacrifice or make great efforts to feed the cows well and ensure that they do not starve. It is true that any amount of sacrifice or effort on our part for the sake of the cow is deserving. If some or even many people set out to do it, it is to be appreciated. But if attention is paid to a small matter by all people, several cows will get a good feed. If we make arrangements to give as feed to the cows all the vegetable waste we generate in our homes daily a number of cows will get fed. We cut vegetables daily at home. In hotels and hostels this is done on a large scale. Instead of throwing away the vegetable waste it should be collected in a special covered container. There should be volunteers who will collect them from door to door. This idea should not be dismissed thinking that nothing much will become available by this way. Considering the amount of waste that gets generated daily in every home and more particularly in hotels and hostels each day's collection will be very substantial. We need not be concerned with the cows that are cared for well in rich homes and in farms. Our aim is to protect those cows which starve and are in danger of being despatched to

the slaughter house. If this task is undertaken and carried out with care we can see for ourselves that a large number of cows can be fed. We can also be the recipients of the grace of Lord Krishna.

Like the peeled off skins of vegetables the water that is obtained when filtering cooked rice can also be given to the cows. But in most homes rice is being cooked in cookers. Where rice is still being cooked in the conventional manner, this service can be rendered. Even the water with which rice is washed before being kept for cooking becomes food for the cow. Wherever possible a small plot can be allotted in the backyard of houses to grow greens that cows specially like.

We should think that we are offering food to *Bhagawān Vāsudēvā* and protect the cows by any of these means. Once we develop that feeling we will not feel the strain in doing anything to help the cow.

* * *

PROTECTIVE SHELTERS

Finally what needs to be done by all people coming together is to ensure that not a single cow goes to the slaughter house and till their natural death they are given food and are sheltered in hygienic sheds. For this purpose shelters should be specially arranged for the cows which have stopped yielding milk. If individuals are not willing to keep them anymore and want to despatch them to slaughter houses they should be purchased from them and kept in such shelters. Several owners of cows may be really poor and will be living a hard life. They cannot be expected to give them away free. But just because money has to be paid for such cows not a single cow should be allowed to go to the slaughter house. It may be thought : 'To purchase such cows from the owners will mean a lot of money. Apart from that it will be a

demanding task to take care of the old cows'. But when we feel the importance of this service money and labour do not count for much.

* * *

PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY IN THE SERVICE OF THE COW

I believe that if awareness is created among our vast population about the need for this service the requisite finance and the required volunteers will become available. It is enough if a few people get together at different places and start making efforts with perseverance. What is to be noted in this is that there should not be a complete dichotomy between those who give money and those who volunteer to do physical service. The one who contributes money should also render some physical service and the one who volunteers to do physical service should also contribute some money. Only then there will be total involvement of all people. Apart from this in the society too, instead of there being two separate groups of people - those who contribute money and those who render physical service - all people will come together as one family and as children of *Gōmāthā*.

My wish is that in addition to we Hindus coming together as a family in the service of the cow we have to carry this message with love to people of other religions also, involve them so that the entire society comes together as a family for doing the service. Religious affinity may take different forms for different people but since compassion to animals is common to all, all religionists in our country should come together on this basis. That is my wish.

* * *

NURTURING THE COW IS PUṆYA, NEGLECTING IT IS SIN

To nurture the cow and protect it is *puṇya* which will give all benefits. To neglect it is a great sin which will invite curse and

there is proof for this. There is proof for both in the life of *Dilīpan* who was a king of the Solar dynasty. When he went to *Dēvalōkam* he returned without going round *Kāmadēnu*. For this mistake he got a curse that he will not have progeny. There is always a remedy for a curse. The calf of that *Kāmadēnu*, Nandini was with *Vasishṭā*, the Kulaguru of the *Sōlar* dynasty. On being told by *Vasishṭā*, *Dilīpan* took Nandini for grazing, gave it a bath and rendered other forms of service. He did all this along with his wife *Sudakshīṇā*. The curse was remedied. He got a child who was to become *Rāghu* and the *Sōlar* dynasty itself was to take his name as *Rāghuvamśam*.

* * *

COW PROTECTION IN OLDEN TIMES

Although there is no use talking about it now we cannot remain without doing so. Before the advent of British rule in every place in every village exclusive grazing plots have been allotted for cattle to graze. But the British government which did not know the importance of the welfare of the cows distributed those plots. From that time the cows started losing their food. Similarly there were tanks meant exclusively for cattle. These have disappeared now. In the government's plan of Minor Irrigation Works such tanks also should be included.

I shall give evidence to show with how much love people cared for the cattle in the olden times. For human beings to get redemption 32 different kinds of dharma (charity) are mentioned. This is also said to be 64. One of these is to erect vertical stones against which the cattle can rub themselves to get relief from itching sensation. In a country where even such small things are considered as great dharma, we are making the cows skinny and bony and make way for killing them. It is a slur on us.

* * *

NATIONAL WEALTH

When speaking about cow protection we should not fail to express our gratitude to the '*Nagarathār*' (a sect of rich merchants of Tamil Nadu) and people of North India who maintain pinjarapoles for cow protection. In olden days in order to ensure that the cows had enough to eat, grazing plots were properly maintained. With urbanization it is all buildings and offices everywhere without garden or fields. It is only now that the government has become aware that this kind of urban development deprives people of even oxygen and is therefore taking interest in ensuring vacant plots for play grounds etc. For the people living in towns these are said to be their lungs. Along with these 'lungs' space should also be provided for grazing plots.

The cow should be considered national wealth. Even after it stops yielding milk it is wealth because it gives dung till it dies. The dung is useful as manure. Nowadays 'gobargas' is also being produced from dung to be used as fuel.

But cow protection is not one which has to be considered in terms of economic viability. Since the cow has also divine and Vaidhika links it has to be protected as we protect our mothers. We should put a stop to the practice of considering the cow as useful only as long as it yields milk.

* * *

MILK NOT TO BE WASTED ON COFFEE

Whatever the cow yields is used in yajnas and activities related to worship of God. We take the milk, curd etc and improve our health but unfortunately what is happening is that most of the milk is being used for coffee. Milk is like amruth but we mix it with the decoction which contains poisonous caffeine. Just as cow protection is necessary people must pay attention to the protection

of the soul also and free themselves from the habit of drinking coffee.

Instead of taking coffee several times a part of the milk used for coffee should be given to the temples for *abhishekam* and a part to poor children. When there are lakhs of children who do not know the taste of milk, people drinking coffee several times in a day is a crime against society.

Instead of coffee in the morning we can take 'kanji' with butter milk. It is said '*dhagaram amrutham*'. Dhagaram is butter milk. From one measure of milk we can get three or four times butter milk and therefore it is economical too. Milk will not suit some constitutions. *Gomāthā* gives buttermilk from milk for such people. People who should not take fatty food can take buttermilk obtained after removing the butter.

* * *

GHEE LAMP

Since the performance of yajnas has come down in numbers there is very little scope for spending ghee on this account. But since god-related activities like *pūjā* at home, in temples, in mutts etc are still taking place we can use ghee for lighting lamps. If we ourselves make cow's ghee and give it to temples and mutts it is great *puṇya*. The glow of ghee lamps which is white will induce internal purity also. It is specially good if it is in the sannidhis in temples. It is the duty of devotees to ensure that ghee lamps are lighted in temples at least on Fridays. Whatever *Gomāthā* gives with great compassion must be put to use. Now either we do not take from her what she gives or use it in improper ways and we are also negligent in protecting her.

Gītā says '*Parasparam bhāvayanthah*'. We and the cow should protect each other mutually. The nourishment we get from

the cow is much more than what we give her during the period she gives milk. The dharma of cow protection (*gō rakshaṇām*) which has taken deep roots in our ancient culture should reflect in our action.

* * *

LAW TO PROTECT COW SLAUGHTER

In the matter of cow protection which has to be ensured by the joint efforts of the people and the government what the government must do is to make a law prohibiting cow slaughter. It is tireless persuasion on the part of the people that will pave the way for such a law. There should be propaganda and publicity to persuade people of all sects to support the prevention of slaughter instead of stopping it out of fear for a law. Even those who have opposite views should be spoken to with love. It is important to know that the Moghul rulers Akbar and Shajehan and in very recent times the Amir of Afghanistan realized the need for cow protection and made laws for that purpose. Therefore it is my belief that if the issue is properly put forth people of all sects will extend to us their support. The government also cannot avoid making the law on the plea that such a law cannot be made against the views of some sections of people and the lawful protection will become available.

To protect certain things without being destroyed it is possible only through law. That is why the government enacts laws. Legal protection has been given even for the preservation of wild animals. Sandalwood trees are similarly protected. Similarly, certain other trees which provide food to adivasis have been protected in certain States.

Whether it is seen from the practical point of view or from the point of view of Vaidhikam there is justification for not killing such a noble animal as the cow. The welfare of the cow will ensure

the welfare of the country. If it is protected sins will come down on their own. If it is subjected to cruelties there will be trouble for the whole world. According to *Śāsthrās Dharma Devatha* is of the form of a bull (Rishabham) with four legs namely, Thapas, purity, compassion and sathyam. In *Bhāgavatham* (1.17) it is said 'Gōmāthā is in association with that bull, that mother cow yields dharma as milk and because the Kali *purushā* subjected the pair to cruelty this age of Kali (Kaliyugam) is in a state of such deterioration'. Therefore for remedying the Kali *dōsham* and dharma to come up cow protection is an important measure. Lord Krishna should bestow His grace so that we do not suffer from the blemish of failing in that duty.

In *Mahābhāratham* in the 'Ānuśāsanika Parva' in which *Bhīshma* gives *Upadēśa* of several dharmas to Yudhishtira he speaks about cow protection and explains its greatness. Nahusha Maharāja was once under a compulsion to purchase *Śyavana Maharishi* for a price. He was worried about what price he could give. He thought 'even if I give all the three worlds that would not equal that great rishi'. At that juncture a rishi who was born of a cow went to him and told him that if a cow was given as price that would be adequate'. The king also accepted the suggestion and said 'I have not found any wealth equal to a cow' - '*Gōbisthulyam na paschyāmi dhānam kinchith*'. He gave a cow as the price, purchased the rishi and then made him free.

There is no greater *puṇya* than the gift of a cow. It is the greatest remedy for sins. The gift (*dhānam*) has to be made after making sure that the person who receives it is capable of protecting it.

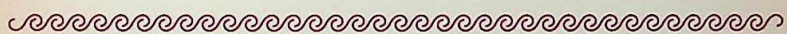
One of the *ślōkas* which *Śyavana Maharishi* says about the cow is :

*Nivishtam gōkulam yathra śwāsam munchathi nirbhayam
Virājayathi tham dēsam pāpam chāsyāpakarshathi*

The meaning of the *śloka* is : 'That country where cows have no fear of any cruelty being inflicted on them and live peacefully in *gōkula* all sins will go and will shine'.

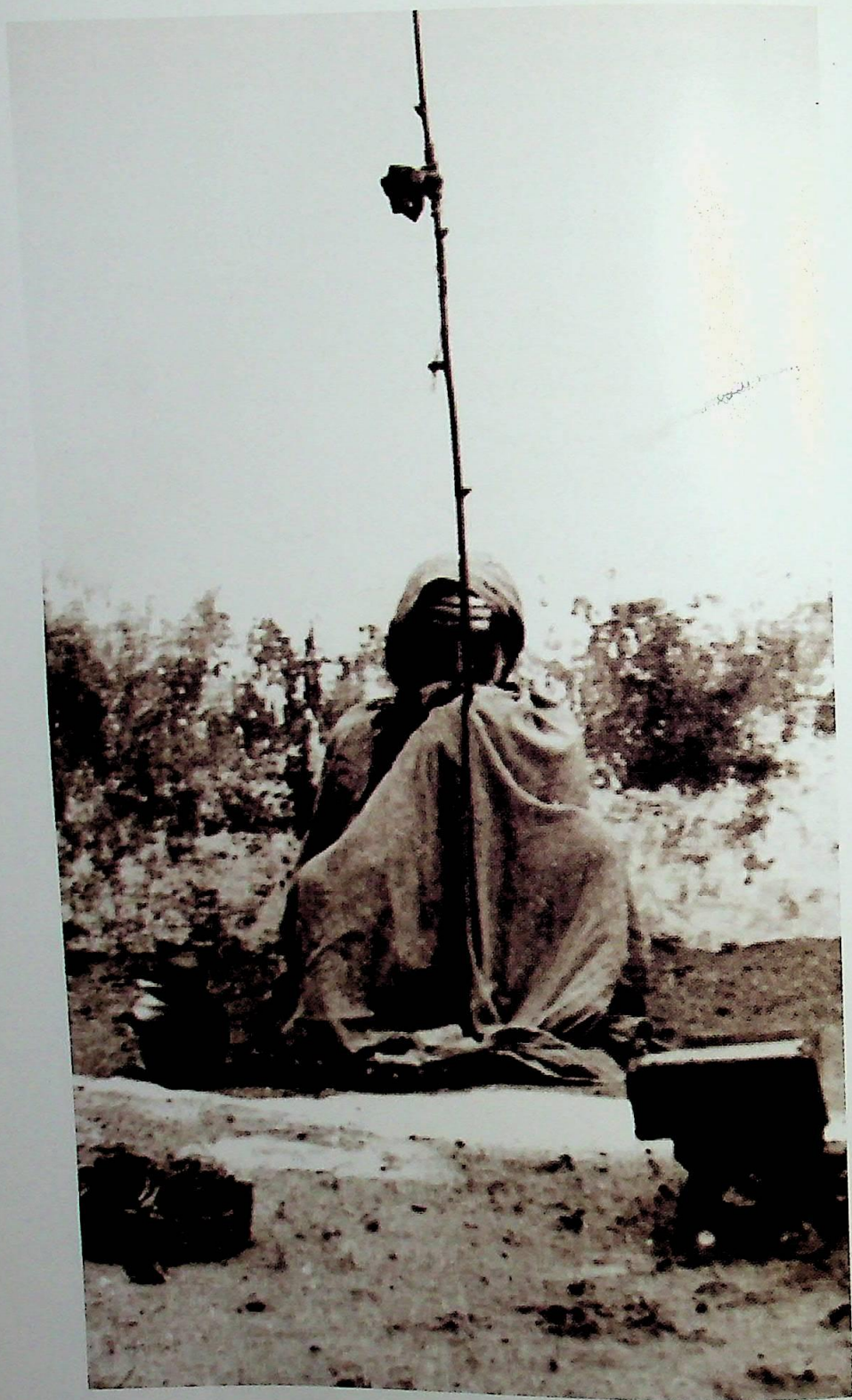
May Lord Krishna bestow His grace so that our *Bhārath* becomes such a country and all of us develop the attitude and ability to make it such.

* * *



CULTURE





THE ART OF DRAMA - THEN AND NOW

The dance of the Lord and the dance of the humans: Great men (*mahāns*) say that the entire world is a drama and the Lord is the '*sūthradhār*' who conducts it. Shakespeare who was a dramatist of great fame also says 'the whole world is a drama; all the men and women are but actors in it'.

In this great drama of the Lord, man too has created the art of drama. From time immemorial this has been part of our literary heritage. In *Vēdhās* in some places *manthrās* are in the form of two persons conversing with each other. Researchers say that this is the origin of drama. Prose, poetry and drama are part of the literature of all the languages of this country.

In Sanskrit the art of drama had a high growth right from the time of *Kālidāsa* and *Bhavabhūthi* who are considered as among the greatest of poets. Both of them have been as great dramatists as they were poets.

What is special about the art of drama: We listen to a lecture. We absorb to some extent to what we have heard. If the lecture is in the form of *Hari Kathā* mixed with songs etc the level of our absorption is more. But here too we only imagine the incidents and conversations narrated by those rendering *Hari Kathā*. But in a drama the various characters come on the stage, exhibit the emotion and act. It is interesting. It therefore makes deep impression on our mind.

Great poets have written epic poems putting together beautiful words. Emotion and experience are the life of such epic poem. They are called '*rasa*'. Depending upon the poets description of Nature the qualities of the characters etc what he writes is interesting. What we hear as poem or epic poem and

enjoy is called '*śrāvya kāvyam*'. But if the same is written in dialogue form dividing it into different scenes it is '*dhrūya kāvyam*' which is drama.

Some people may try to get more subtle enjoyments in imagining things rather than the various aspects being physically depicted with scenes and actors. In Sanskrit literature the writer, instead of telling everything openly, will leave certain things for the reader to imagine and complete it himself and this is greatly appreciated by those well versed in '*Alankāra Śāsthā*'. Conveying certain things indirectly without openly saying it is praised as 'Dhwani', 'Vyangyam' etc. In the dramas of *Kālidāsa* too such dhwani are abundant. Simply because it was a drama it does not mean that they said everything openly without subtlety. Such dramas - *Śākunthalam*, *Mahāvīra Charitham* etc may perhaps be enjoyed better by imagining than by seeing them on the stage. But this depends upon the quality of the 'rasika'.

Generally speaking people do not very much like reading a poem. But if the same is presented as a drama they go in crowds and see it with great enthusiasm. Drama is able to convey matters with greater force and emphasis than what a book or lecture can.

* * *

DRAMA AND EMOTION

In any drama there will be a mix of various emotions. If a single emotion runs through the whole drama it will become tiring to see. If all types of emotions are equally depicted there will be no enduring experience since each emotion will cancel out the other. In any drama a particular emotion will dominate. The other types of emotions will help to highlight this in the manner of the accompanying artistes in a music concert. If we consider the drama '*Veni Samhāram*' of Bhatta *Nārāyaṇā*, valour will be

dominant in this. Still there will be some humour, some sorrow etc. *Bhavabhūthi* has written two dramas on Sri Rama - *Mahāvīra Charitham* and *Uththararāma Charitham*. In *Mahāvīra Charitham*, true to its name, valor dominates. The author mainly depicts Sri Rama's valorous exploits. We generally connect the name *Mahāvīr* with the founder of Jainism. In the North, *Mahāvīr* is connected with Hanuman. But *Bhavabhūthi*'s *Mahāvīr* is Sri Rama. But in *Uththararāma Charitham* in which he describes the events following Sri Rama's coronation, namely sending Sita to the forest etc, he makes us melt in sorrow. Just as it is said that *Kālidāsa* is known for comparisons (*upamā Kālidāsasya*) it can be said of *Bhavabhūthi* '*Kāruṇyam Bhavabhūthi reva*'. '*Bhavabhūthi*' is known for description of sorrow. He describes sorrow in such a touching manner. In '*navarasas*' '*Karuṇā*' means sorrow. We use the word '*Karuṇā*' in the sense of compassion, pity.

I shall give an example of *Bhavabhūthi*'s '*Karuṇā rasa*'.

Instead of crying aloud if one points to oneself and talks with a tinge of humour the sorrow depicted touches our heart more than the wailing of someone. In *Uththararāma Charitham* *Bhavabhūthi* makes Rama speak in this manner :

*Hey! Hastha Rāmasya gāthramasi nirbhara garbha kinna
Sītā vivāsana patōh karuṇā kuthasthē?*

Bhavabhūthi makes Rama speak like this at the time when he draws out his sword to kill Champukan. The reason why he wanted to kill Champukan was that he was performing a form of severe thapas which he was not entitled to do according to his social status. Because of his thapas, dharma in the world was affected and therefore Rama who was conducting a dharma rajya went to kill him. Although Champukan did what was beyond his fitness to do what he did was a noble thing namely thapas. Therefore Rama's hand hesitates to strike Champuka who was in thapas. At that point

the poet speaks through Rama, addressing his hand : 'Oh! Hand. Why this kind of pity on your part? You are a part of Rama's body. What kind of person is that Rama? He exiled to the forest Sita who was in her advanced stage of pregnancy. You, hand who are a part of such a Rama, what for the pity you are showing?'

Even when making Rama indulge in self-condemnation the poet not only depicts the *Karuṇā* rasa but makes us realize that Rama had rejected Sita only for upholding Raja dharma. The poet depicts the character of the person by the person blaming himself. He conveys to us dharma also.

* * *

THE HERO

Although there are several characters in a drama the goal of a good drama used to be to highlight the great qualities of one's character, to make us like such qualities and educate us on dharma. Although drama literature in Sanskrit was of a wide variety and there were several characters the '*dhīrōdhāththan*' who combined in himself valor and good qualities and the '*dhīraprasānthan*' who combined in himself valor and peaceful nature were praised as ideal heroes. Great dramatists show before the people the ways of dharma through such noble characters.

* * *

HAPPY END

There is another aspect of Sanskrit drama which needs to be mentioned. The authors of drama were bound by a rule that they should, considering the attitude of the people, show that one who follows the good path will meet with good at the end. That is why even in *Uththararāma* Charitham which is noted for the '*Karuṇā*

rasa' *Bhavabhūti* has not shown that Sita disappeared into the earth but says that she reunited with Rama. The idea was : 'If ordinary people have to develop liking for dharma it must be shown that one who followed the ways of dharma met with good at the end. Another reason for the happy ending is : 'People are already suffering so much. They want to forget all that for sometime at least and they come to the drama. Though the scenes of sorrow depicted in a drama may contain a kind of joy it can be enjoyed only by good rasikas. The ordinary people should not burden themselves with more sorrow when returning home after seeing the drama'. Therefore they made it a rule that all dramas must have a happy ending. It is for this reason that in old Sanskrit dramas there is no tragedy. It was all comedy.

It is true that even in sorrow there is something that elevates us. That is why dramatists of the West like Shakespeare wrote great tragedies which are celebrated all over the world. Such dramas are appropriate to the customs and culture of those countries. They know how to make themselves happy in other ways, for example the Ball Room dance. Therefore if there is weeping and sorrow in the drama it is all right. In our life style such dance and play and pleasure making are not there nor do we need them. Moreover generally however well placed and comfortable we are we do not exhibit our happiness but put up a long face. Probably it is because of this factor those who had laid down the rules for drama felt that people who go to watch a drama in the midst of such feelings should return happy after seeing it. But on that account it does not mean that everything was just humour and comic. They have felt that all the rasas must be there. Therefore they have classified them as navarasa and gave importance to depicting them.

* * *

NAVARASAS - PEACE (ŚĀNTHAM)

In an ethic poem or a drama there is a plot and several incidents, description of Nature, different kinds of word play etc. But these do not provide the life to it. Only 'rasam', the emotional experience has been considered its life. However beautifully words may be arranged in a sentence it will not become poetry. Only if it has 'rasa' it will attain the quality of poetry. A great critic has said : 'Vākyam rasāthmakam kāvyam'. There are two opinions regarding the number of rasas. One set of people say it is eight and the other set says it is nine. One view is that the eight are : 'Śrūṅgāram', 'Hāsyam', 'Karuṇā' (sorrow), 'Roudhram' (anger), 'Vīram' (valor) 'Bhayānakam' (fear), 'Bibathsam' (disgust), 'Adhbutham' (wonder). The other view is that 'Śānatham' should be included to make it nine.

It does not mean that those who did not include 'Śānatham' as a rasa thought of 'śānatham' as something low. As a matter of fact they only respected it more than the other group. Our culture is to get fulfillment in 'santhi'. We conclude any Vaidhika activity by saying 'Śānthih Śānthih Śānthih' three times. In that state of śānatham (peace) everything subsides without the distinction between the one who feels and what is felt. Feeling is an attitude of the mind which affects the person. But a state of peace is one in which all activity has subsided. Therefore how can this be added to the other eight which are full of feelings? When there is 'rasam' it is different for the one who tastes it but when (in peace) the rasika and the rasam are one it cannot be included with the other eight. This is the balanced (even) state of the mind. All others - whether it is love, laughter, anger, valor - agitate the mind. They do not create the state of enduring happiness. They are temporary. It is only 'Śānatham' which gives unchanging happiness. This should not be included with the rasas. It is the state in which all other rasas find fulfillment' - this is the argument of one group.

Humour which is one of the rasas is different from happiness. There is no rasa as '*ānanda rasa*' (rasa of happiness). Humour makes us laugh and creates temporary joy. *Ānandam* (bliss) is the firm and permanent nature of the *āthmā*. Bliss is to remain in the state of *sāntham* without being affected by anything and without a trace of sorrow.

That bliss prevails all over like the sunlight. But we are not aware of it just as we do not see the sunlight below a tree. Remaining in the shadow of *māyā* we do not know this bliss. Just as a little sunlight is seen when the branches of a tree move when feelings such as anger, love, valour, fear, sorrow etc show up a little of the bliss falls on us. If we experience a feeling, good or bad, is not the *āthmā* the basis for it? Therefore, whichever rasa we may experience the light of bliss which is natural to the *āthmā* will be falling a little. But if we come out of the shadow of the tree we experience the full sunlight.

Sunlight has no colour. Therefore one view is that in '*sāntham*' there is no feeling, no experience of any rasa. Yet, it is from the sunlight all the colours have come. When sunlight is refracted through a spectroscope we can see all the seven colours coming out of it. Scientists have measured the proportion in which the different colours are in sunlight. When the seven colours are mixed in the same proportion together they become white!

Each element when burnt shines with a particular colour. The same thing happens when burning chemicals. The fire emitted by a burning match stick is yellow. But in fireworks different sticks emit different colours. Petrol when burnt emits blue light. Copper sulphate emits green light. All the elements each of which will emit a particular colour while burning are in the sun.

Scientists have discovered that it is because all those elements burn together the sunlight is white. In addition to these

elements scientists have discovered that there is helium in the sun which is not found on the earth much. In Latin 'Helios' means the sun. That is why we call this universe which has for its center the sun as 'Helio-centric'. If we see the origin of this word 'helium' it is from Sanskrit. In Sanskrit 'Hēli' means Sun. The fun is that this helium is non-inflammable. It is a very light gas.

The reason why I started with Navarasa and narrated the story of the Sun is to make the point that just as all the colours have their origin in the white sunlight all the feelings originate from the feelingless '*sāntham*'. All these are the peaceful *āthmā*. But even when it is all these it also remains separate from these unaffected. Just as when all other elements burn helium does not burn the athma remains extremely light without being affected by any feeling.

When in the state of bliss it is ocean of bliss everywhere. It is only that which gives a little happiness temporarily when it is as other rasas. Just as each element burns with a different colour we display different feelings in different mental attitudes. If we attain the state which is totally devoid of feelings and which is the source of all feelings we will become self-luminous like the sun.

* * *

ARTS MUST HELP IN REACHING THE STATE OF PEACE (SĀNTHAM)

I have spoken about the rasas in literature. There are similarly six rasas in taste also - sweet, bitter, astringent, sour, pungent, salty. None of these can be tasted separately. Sugar or jaggery can be had a little. But these cannot be taken as much as when they are mixed with flour etc and made into eatables. But if these six tastes which cannot be taken each separately are mixed in different proportions we can eat. This is an example of the taste of

coming together as a sangam. In life too, if there is one feeling only we will develop cloy. That is why there is a mixture - weeping, laughter, sorrow, failure, pride, shame etc.

But just as there is the white which is made of all colours is there a taste which is made of all the six tastes? Just as there is *sāntham* in feelings and sunlight in colours, is there anything in taste? There is one. That is butter. It is white and soft. There is *sāntham* and *sāthvikam* in its taste. All other tastes are *rājasam*. They activate emotions. Butter is not of that kind. If butter is taken a little more we will feel dull and even sleepy. Krishna *Paramāthmā* steals butter only for its *sāntham* and *sāthvikam*. The butter cannot be said to taste sweet. But we can say that it is really 'madhuram'. Another speciality about butter is that if a lamp is lighted with the ghee obtained from it the light burns white like sunlight. Each kind of oil emits a different light when burning. A lamp with gingelly oil will be yellow. That with groundnut oil will have a particular shade of yellow. It is only the lamp with ghee that burns with white light and we get a feeling of peace even when we see it. It is not reddish. That is the characteristic of good ghee. That is why ghee lamp is required to be lighted in the sannidhis in temples so that there will be peace in everyone's mind.

Saint-composer *Thyāgarājā* has said that without *sāntham* there is no well being. By whatever feeling and emotion we are affected, if we want permanent welfare, permanent good, we have to attain the state of *sāntham*. All arts must help in this.

Even if there is the flow of a variety of emotions in a drama if it is a drama of high quality we should get an indescribable feeling of relaxation and peace after seeing the drama. In the olden times drama had enjoyed such a high status that even *āchāryās* of different religions wrote dramas to convey the philosophical content of their religion. Philosophers like *Kumārila Bhattar* when quoting authorities for their *siddhānthās* have quoted from dramas

like *Śākunthalam* along with quotes from *Vēdhās* and *Dharma sāsthrās*. There was one Krishna *Miśra* who is said to have been a contemporary of *Jayadēvā* of *Gītā Gōvindham* fame. Krishna *Miśra* wrote the drama '*Prabhōda Chandrōdayam*' to explain the philosophical truth of Adhvaitha. Later, *Vēdānthā Dēśika* a *Vaishṇava* scholar wrote a drama based on the *Viśishtādhvaitha* philosophy, which came to be called '*Sankalpa Sūryōdhayam*'. *Madhvāchārya* who came later questioned both Adhvaitham and *Viśishtādhvaitham*. Therefore he wrote a drama condemning both. Is it not *Rāghu* who 'swallows' both the Sun and the Moon? Therefore he gave the name '*Ubhayagrāsa Rāhūdhayam*' (*Rāhu* udhayam) - Ubhayam - that is both. *Rāghu's* udhayam which catches both the Sun and the Moon.

* * *

TODAY'S FALLEN STATE

What is the state of the drama today? It is true that it is able to attract a lot of people. Is it enough if people are attracted and their sensations are tickled? It is claimed that drama and cinema can do a lot of good. But the question is what happens in practice. It is like claiming that a lot of good can be done with atomic power but they go on manufacturing bombs.

What should a responsible dramatist and the one who stages the drama do? They should strive to elevate the people's mind. They should write and stage such dramas as channel the feelings of people in the right direction and make them live in peace with others in the world, they themselves remaining in peace. What is being staged now is the opposite of this. Dramas and cinemas are such that those who come out after seeing them have their minds spoiled more than before. *Gītā* says that desire and anger are the two great enemies of man. Nowadays these two dominate in

pictures. It is said that in dramas and cinemas different sects of people are being provoked to fight with each other or with those of other parties.

Previously dramas were bound by certain regulations. After such regulations have gone the art itself has become useless. There were rules about what can be depicted on the stage. Certain incidents would be described in the words of some character but not physically depicted on the stage.

There were people who belonged to the *jāthi* of *Bharathaputhrās* whose exclusive profession it was to act in dramas. They would not allow others to enter into their line. There was no such thing as a son deserting his father and joining the cinema or a woman leaving the home and becoming a star. More than all these even though men and women acted subject to respectable regulations only actual husband and wife would act as a pair in a drama. This used to be called '*Natī - sūthradhār*' tradition. Now all such regulations are gone. It is said that cinema is responsible for many children becoming wayward. Our dharma has been adversely affected by this. The danger today to the society on account of drama is greater than before because previously drama used to be staged in one place. With the advent of cinema any number of prints can be taken and shown all over.

It is true that drama is a good art if it is conducted properly but looking at what is actually happening I think that cinema and drama should not be there at all. I think it is enough if there are educative documentaries. Cinema is not required for reforming the society or for helping its growth.

All people may worship me. But if I do not speak out what appears to me as wrong just to get a good name there cannot be a greater wrong. If the present laws are not adequate to bring those connected with cinema under a good discipline my view is that cinema need not be there.

Some people may think that if pictures based on *purāṇās* are taken they will have my blessings. When I say that even pictures of social themes are not needed the question does not arise about whether I will approve of the cinema stars donning the role of gods.

Starting from *Vēdha* adhyayana a lot of wealth pertaining to our great tradition (*sampradhāya*) has been lost. When we see the way modern cinema and drama are going and the harm that has been caused to the society I think that our art of drama may as well die. If cinema which has come as a deluge to push our people into wrong ways cannot be changed I think that even drama which has come as a great art from ancient times may as well go.

I do not think that things will change because of my telling. But whether they change or not it is my duty to speak out and I have done it.

* * *

ADHVAITHAM AND KĀNCHĪ SRI MATAM FIGURING IN A SWAYAMVARAM

The greatness of *Nalā* - Damayanthi: The king of Vidharba, Bhima arranged for a swayamvaram for his daughter Damayanthi. She had already heard of *Nalā*, the king of *Nishāda* and had developed love for him. *Nalā* also had heard of Damayanthi and loved her. They had not seen each other. It was by hearing about each other's qualities and beauty that they had developed the love for each other. They had also sent a hamsa bird as a messenger. Not being aware of this, king Bhima had arranged for the swayamvaram.

All the kings who had heard of Damayanthi's extraordinary beauty had come for the swayamvaram. The *Dēvās* - Indra, Agni, Yama and *Varuṇa* - also desired to marry her. But they knew that

she had already accepted in her mind *Naḷa* as her husband. They were aware that being a noble lady she would not look at anyone else even if he is the *Dēvarājā*. They thought that if one of them had to marry her the only way was that *Naḷa* himself should recommend to her one of them and perhaps she would listen to him. Therefore before the swayamvaram the *Dēvās* approached *Naḷa* and asked him 'Will you do us a help?' *Naḷa* gave word that he would. A *Dēvā* then told him 'You should go to Damayanthi as a messenger and tell her to chose one of us at the swayamvaram'.

Has such a thing been heard of anywhere? *Naḷa* and Damanthi had developed love for each other. *Naḷa* had come to Vidharbha expecting that she was going to choose him only. In such a situation the *Dēvās* told him to pressurize her to marry one of them!

Why did the *Dēvās* do this? They did so because they were aware of the greatness of both *Naḷa* and Damayanthi. They knew that she was a great *pathivrathā* who would not change her mind and think of even *Dēvēndra*. That was why they thought that the only chance they had was if *Naḷa* himself would recommend to her one of them. They also knew that *Naḷa* would abide by his word. *Naḷa* was great and was an upholder of sathyam. In order to keep his word to the *Dēvās* *Naḷa* was ready to sacrifice his own love and go to Damayanthi as a messenger on behalf of the *Dēvās*.

There are great persons (*Mahātmās*) who are called '*Puṇya ślōkas*' and '*Prātha smaranīya*' - that is, the ancients have laid down that as we get up in the morning we should think of these virtuous men (*Puṇya purushā*). By remembering them we will acquire their sathyam, dharma, *thyāgam*, right conduct etc. By thinking of them before commencing our daily life we can face life's struggle successfully as they had done. By thinking of them our blemishes and thoughts contrary to dharma will get reduced. At least temporarily we will get courage, clarity of mind and peace.

There are four such '*puṇya ślōkas*'. Of these, *Naḷa* is the first, then Dharmaputhra, third is Sita Devi and the fourth is Krishna *Paramāthmā*.

Puṇya ślōkō Naḷō Rājā Puṇya ślōkō yudhistirah
Puṇya ślōkā cha vaidhehī puṇya ślōkō Janārdhanah

The problems these four had faced in life were countless. But despite all that they never swerved from the path of dharma and in the end were victorious. By thinking of them early in the morning our buddhi will also desire to go on that path.

Naḷa got ready to go to Damayanthi as messenger. But the palace where she lived was highly protected. Therefore Indra conjured up a magic (*Indrajāl*) and made *Naḷa* invisible to all others except to Damayanthi. *Naḷa* reached Damayanthi seen only by her. Damayanthi was extremely happy. But *Naḷa* kept the word he had given the *Dēvās* and pleaded with Damayanthi saying 'they are much greater than me. It is therefore good if you marry Indra or Agni or Yama or *Varuṇa*'. Damayanthi was not moved by his pleading. She said she would not give up her *pathivrathā* dharma even if *Naḷa* himself wanted. She told him firmly that after having accepted him in her mind and heart as husband even if she thinks of another person she would become a fallen woman (*pathithai*).

Naḷa realized that he could not succeed in his pleadings with Damayanthi and therefore returned to the *Dēvās*. They too knew all that had happened. Therefore although *Naḷa* did not succeed in his effort they were satisfied that he had kept his word and had pleaded with Damayanthi sincerely. They therefore granted him some boons.

The time for swayamvaram arrived. All the kings had assembled. *Naḷa* too was there - not one *Naḷa* but five *Naḷas*. Everyone was surprised at this - how were there five *Naḷas*? This too was a *Dēvā Māyā*. Indra and the other three *Dēvās* had come

taking the form of *Nalā*. They thought that Damayanthi would not be able to find out the real *Nalā* and if she choses one of the false *Nalās*, one of them stood a chance. Earlier, without a sense of shame, they had requested *Nalā* himself to recommend one of them to Damayanthi. Now all of them had taken the form of *Nalā*. Infatuation is such a terrible thing.

Damayanthi came to the venue of swayamvara. She kept moving after seeing each prince. She had only *Nalā* in mind. Finally when she came to *Nalā* there were five of them! She thought 'I do not find any difference between these five. If by mistake I garland a wrong *Nalā* my Pathivrithyam will be blemished'. She stood perplexed.

* * *

SACRIFICE BY MOTHERS

The original story of *Nalā*-Damayanthi is '*Nalōpākyaṇam*' which occurs in *Mahābhāratha*. SriHarsha has written the Sanskrit epic 'Naishadam'. Since it is the story of the king of *Nishāda* it is called Naishadam. Since Naishadam is like an excellent medicine for scholars it is said 'Naishadam vidwat aushadam'. It cannot be easily understood by ordinary people. It is written in a highly poetic style.

SriHarsha's father was a 'pundit' in a king's court. At one time some other pandit from another kingdom came to that court. There was a debate between the two in which SriHarsha's father was defeated. He became heart-broken and returned home with a sense of shame. The worry resulted in his death.

SriHarsha was a young child at that time. The mother *Māmalladēvi* brought up the child. She took a vow that to compensate for her husband having lost in the debate she would make her son a great scholar. Her husband had given her *upadēsam*

of a manthra called '*Chinthāmaṇi*'. If *japā* is done with that manthra in the prescribed manner *Saraswathī*'s grace can be had. She gave *upadēsam* of the *Chinthāmaṇi manthra* to her young child. She trained the child to keep doing *japā* of that manthra all the time. Being a child he kept on memorizing it even during play time. But *Māmalladēvi* was worried about when the child would have 'siddhi' of the manthra. Suddenly she thought of an idea.

Such an idea will occur only to a mother who is prepared to do any sacrifice for the sake of the greatness of her child. What was that idea? Some *manthras* used to be practiced in a severe (*ugra*) form. According to this if the *japā* of the manthra is done sitting on a corpse manthra siddhi will materialize quickly. That is why even now some upasakas (practitioners) of manthras go to the cremation ground and do *japam*. Even as a child Sri Harsha used to be lying on his mother and uttering the *Chinthāmaṇi* manthra. This only gave the idea which involved great sacrifice. One day when she was lying down the child got on to her and kept doing the manthra *japā*. *Māmalladēvi* did not want to miss that opportunity. She at once strangled herself and gave up her life. She thought that somehow her child should attain unequalled scholarship and it did not matter even if she gave up her life. The child thought that the mother was sleeping and continued to do the *japā* of the manthra. Because of the mother's great sacrifice the child received the full grace of *Saraswathī*. Although the incident appears cruel what is important in the story is the sacrifice done by the mother.

A mother will do any sacrifice for the greatness of her child. There was a *Chōlā* king in Tamil Nadu who had a name related to his reddish eyes. The reason for this was the sacrifice made by his mother. When his mother had labour pains the astrologer of the royal court predicted that the period on that day after one 'muhurtham' (an hour and forty eight minutes) would be very auspicious and a child born during that period would shine as a

Chakravarthi. The queen was worried that the child might be born before the arrival of that muhurtham. Those who are suffering labour pain will usually look forward to quick delivery and the end to the pain. But this queen did not mind if the period of her suffering got prolonged but was keen that the child should be born in the appointed muhurtham. Therefore she ordered that she should be kept hung upside down so that delivery would be delayed. That was done. Delivery got delayed as desired by her and a child was born in the auspicious lagna. Since she had been kept upside down the child's face became blood shot. Particularly the eyes became very red. Therefore the child was given a name to indicate the red eyes. As the astrologer predicted he became a great king.

* * *

ADHVAITHAM IN SWAYAMVARAM

Sri Harsha became a great poet (Mahakavi) by the sacrifice of his mother. In the Naishadam he wrote he has made reference to the *Chinthāmaṇi* manthra and the methods of using it. He has also mentioned that he attained this scholarship by the power of this manthra. He also says that after the marriage of *Nalā* and Damayanthi *Saraswathī Dēvi* Herself blessed them with the *Chinthāmaṇi* manthra.

We have seen that Damayanthi stood perplexed on seeing five *Nalās* all of whom looked identical. It is at this stage SriHarsha makes an interesting comparison which the followers of *Sri Ādhi Sankara Bhagavadhpādā*'s Adhvaitham will find interesting. SriHarsha says that just as people are perplexed not being able to find Adhvaitham which is the truth among the five religions Damayanthi was perplexed in not being able to find the real *Nalā* among the five.

*Sapthum prayachathi na pakshachathushtayē thām
Thallapaśamsini na panchama kōti māthrē
Śraddhām dhadhē nishadhārat vimathou mathānām
Adhvaitha thathva iva sathyatharēpi lōkah*

What the five religions are has been said in the Bharatham. *Sāṅkyam*, *Pāthanjalam*, *Pāncharāthram*, *Pāsupatham*, *Vēdhām*. *Sāṅkyam* makes no reference to *Īswara* but deals with metaphysics. *Pāthanjalam* is *Rāja yōgam*, *Ashtāṅga yōgam* etc. *Pāncharāthram* says that only *Vishṇu* is the Supreme Truth. *Pāsupatham* says that *Śiva* is the Supreme Truth. *Vēdhā* has all other religions as its parts. The other religions have taken a particular aspect mentioned by *Vēdhā* and made that itself a whole *sampradhāya*. The highest import of *Vēdhās* is *Adhvaitham* which says : 'There is nothing other than *Brahmam*; even the *jīvā* is *Brahmam*'. Sri Harsha thought on these lines and instead of mentioning '*Vēdha Matham*' he has said '*Adhvaitha thathvam*'.

Since all the religions turn the ordinary people away from their worldly concerns all of them will look alike - just as all the five *Naḷas* looked alike. Yet only one of them was the real *Naḷa*. In the same manner *Adhvaitham* only is *sathyam*, says SriHarsha.

Instead of saying '*sathyam*' he says it is '*sathyatharam*'. There is something special in this. '*Tharam*' means what is greater or higher. *Sathyatharam* means '*greatest truth*'. Does it then mean there is some truth which is of a lower category? Yes. There is. What is *sathyam* all the time is the highest truth. What is temporarily *sathyam* is of the lower type. What is never true (*sathyam*) is false, *asathyam*. The son of a barren woman, the horn of a hare - these never exist. These are entirely false - '*athyantha asath*'. When a piece of tin shines in sunlight we think it is a coin; we see a rope made of hay in darkness and take it to be a snake. The truth is that neither there is coin nor there is snake. Till we

know the truth we feel happy that we are going to get a coin or the fear that the snake may bite. These feelings are real.

Even though there is no coin there is the tin which gives the impression to us of a coin. Similarly the rope which is a reality gives the impression of a snake. But there is no such supporting material either for the barren woman's son or the horn of the hare. Therefore the snake perceived in the rope and the coin perceived in the tin are not 'athyantha asath'. But nor are they 'permanent sathyam'. They temporarily looked as sathyam and created in us joy (in the case of the coin) and fear (in the case of the snake). But when the truth is known that it is tin or rope the feeling of joy or fear are gone. This is what is called 'māyā', 'mithya', 'prāthibhāsika sathyam' - lower level of sathyam. Dream is also like this. So long as we keep seeing it, it is sathyam. When the dream is ended and what was seen has become false the one who dreamt who was the support to the dream is very much there. These worldly activities are described as 'Vyavahāra sathyam'. The world keeps changing. We keep on changing. What is never changing, what is 'sathyatharam' is not in the worldly affairs. If these are seen from the state of *jñāna* this 'Vyavahāra sathyam' will be like dream, *Prāthibhāsika sathyam* like the tin-coin and the rope-snake. *Paramāthmā* is the only sathyam which is never changing. It is that which is seen as all these appearances just as the rope is seen as snake. If all these appearances are destroyed by *jñāna*, only *Paramāthmā* or *Brahmam* which is the support will remain.

The other *siddhāntās* and religions will be sathyam to some extent. But what is sathyam for all times that is 'sathyatharam' is only Adhvaitham.

Because the world which is a temporary reality shows itself as permanent sathyam we think that this world is real. The *Dēvās* who went to Damayanthi's swayamvaram also were in disguise.

One should not get angry thinking that SriHarsha had said that all *siddhānthās* other than Adhvaitham are false. Only if he had said that Adhvaitham alone is sathyam it would mean that others are false. But since he described Adhvaitham as 'Sathyatharam' it would mean that the others are not entirely false but are true in certain states.

True Adhvaithis are never against any *siddhānthās*. *Gaudapādāhā*, one of the great Adhvaitha *āchāryās* says 'the other religions have mutual clash. We are not against any of them'. In the beginning stages Adhvaitham accepts the religions in which bhakthi is practiced to *Paramāthmā* treating it as different. Adhvaithis are sure that the practitioner of any siddhantha as he goes deep into its practice will ultimately reach Adhvaitham. When the other *siddhānthās* help in taking one to the highest truth how can it be said that they are false?

Sri Harsha has used just one word 'sathyatharam' to reflect all these ideas.

* * *

SARASWATHI'S SKILL

According to SriHarsha's narrative his favourite deity *Saraswathī* herself accompanied Damayanthi to the venue of swayamvara and told her about each prince. When she saw there the *Dēvās* she too was embarrassed. Can the *Dēvās* cheat *Saraswathī*? But *Saraswathī* was not inclined to make it open that Indra and the other *Dēvās* had come in disguise. She thought it would be indiscreet. If she did not speak the truth that too would be wrong. Since she is the Goddess of knowledge she told about the five in such a manner that others could not understand. The way she described each of them is called '*Panchanaḷiyam*'.

Since the other four were *Dēvās* their feet did not touch the ground. They did not wink. Damayanthi noted all this and garlanded the real *Nalā*.

All of you know the story of *Naḷa*-Damayanthi. But I narrated it briefly to show that in that epic there is philosophical truth.

* * *

HOW LITERATURE SPEAKS OF DHARMA

In the manner of a master who makes a command the *Vedhās* give injunctions 'speak the truth, follow the path of dharma etc'. This is called 'Prabhu Sammithai'. The same truths are explained by *purāṇās* through stories told in the manner of a friend speaking. It is called 'suhrith sammithai'. Even if they are stories the rishis who wrote the *purāṇās* would explicitly state the dharma emphatically - like a suhrith, a friend who follows the right path. A poet speaks dharma in a much sweeter manner. He would speak in a manner that even when we enjoy the beauty of his poem we will absorb the dharma. The poet's literary output is called '*kānthā sammithai*', - that is, it is like the words of the dear wife.

A great poet will give the highest dharma and truths mingled with 'navarasas'. Those who are in the literary field should consider this as their swadharma. Writing should be not just pleasing but should convey dharmas. What he writes should not make the reader happy for the time being but should elevate him.

* * *

THE DEITY OF KĀNCCHI MUTT IN THE STORY OF NAḼA

Another important point about Naishadham is that Sri Harsha has not only referred to Adhvaitham but has also spoken about *Chandramoulīswara*, the presiding deity of our Mutt. Among the several kings who had gathered at Damayanthi's swayamvaram there were also kings from Tamil Nadu. About the king who had gone from *Kāncchīpuram*, *Saraswathī Dēvi* tells Damayanthi thus:

*Sindhōjathramaya pavithramasrujath thathkīrthi pūrthādhbutham
Yathra snān̄thi jaganthi santhi kavayah kē vā na vāchamyamāh
Yadh bindhuśriyam indhu ranjāthi jalam sāviśya drushyētharō
Yasyāsou jaladēvathā spatikabhūh jagarthi yōgēśwarah*

The meaning of the *ślōka* is : 'This king has dug a huge ocean-like tank in *Kānchīpuram*. It is full of pure and clear water. Poets will not be able to find words to describe it. It will look as though a drop from it has become the moon. *Yogēśwara* for whom *abhishēkam* is done with the water from this tank becomes invisible in the water'. Like water pure *spatikam* has no colour. Therefore if it is immersed in water it will not be seen separately. When *abhishēkam* is performed to *Spatikalingam* with water the *lingam* cannot be seen as distinct from water.

Who is the *Yogēśwara* of *Spatikam* in *Kānchīpuram*? It is *Chandramoulīswara* in our Mutt. *Ādhi Āchāryā* installed five *Spatikalingas* in five places - *Mukthi lingam* in *Badhri*, *Vara lingam* in *Nūakanta kshēthra* in *Nepal*, *Mōksha lingam* in *Chidambaram*, *Bhōga lingam* in *Srungēri* and *Yōga lingam* in *Kānchīpuram*.

Sri Harsha refers to the *Yōga lingam* worshipped in our *Kānchī Mutt* as the *Spatika Yogēśwara*. He says indirectly that digging of the tank from which water is taken for the *abhishēkam* of this *Mūrthi* is itself a matter of pride for the king.

In *SriHarsha's ślōka* the last word is '*Yogēśwara*'. Some copyist at some stage wrongly copied it as *Yāgēśwara* and that has come to say. But nowhere in *Kānchīpuram* was there a *Yāgēśwara* at any time. *Mallinātha Sūri* was one of those who had written notes for Sanskrit kavyas. In his commentary on *Naishadham* he has taken the word as *Yogēśwara*. He has also clarified that the *Spatika Linga Yogēśwara* was famous : '*Spatikam lingam Yogēśwara ithi prasiddhih*'. *Mahāmahōpādhyāya Gōpinath Kavirāj* who was a great scholar in recent times has also accepted the word

as 'Yogēswara'. Therefore there is no doubt that SriHarsha has referred to the deity of our Mutt only.

It appears that SriHarsha not only had a great liking for Adhvaitham but had great bhakthi for the *Chandramoulīswara* lingam which had been worshipped by Sri Āchāryā. We learn that he lived about 800 years back. When we see that he has praised those who had dug tanks it appears that probably he belonged to Gujarat or Marwad which experienced water scarcity. In these places many edicts have been found in which digging of tank, wells etc has been praised as 'Vāpī praśasthi'. When we see that several hundred years back a poet who was in the northern parts of our country had known *Yogēswara* of *Kānchīpuram* and praised him we realize how ancient is the popularity of our Mutt. It is also seen that *Chandramoulīswara* who is being worshipped here belongs to the world. Every home has a 'swāmi' to whom *pūjā* is performed. Āchāryā has made the whole world a home and installed the five lingas. The worship of *Chandramoulīswara* should continue for ever for the world to be prosperous.

* * *

THE GREAT CHŌLĀ KING*

ONE WHO HAD ON HIS HEAD THE HOLY FEET OF THE
LORD (ŚIVAPĀDHAŚĒKARAN)

(*What follows was said by the *Mahāswāmi* in the context of the 1000th anniversary of the great *Chōlā* King *Rājarāja* I who was the 10th in the line of *Chōlā* Kings who ruled over a vast territory in the South from 810 A.D. to 1279 A.D. with *Thanjāvūr* as their capital most of the time).

We celebrate a great king. But he himself thought that he was merely a servant of another great king. He felt that if he kept that great king's feet on his head it was a matter of greater pride for him than the gem-studded crown. He is the most celebrated *Rājarāja*

Chōlā. He always considered himself the servant of Lord *Paramēśwara* who is the Chakravarthi of the whole world. He felt happy in the thought that the Chakravarthi's holy feet were on his head and considered that being subordinate to him as '*Sivapādhasēkara*' was great.

Rājarāja was greatly devoted to Lord *Natarāja* of Chidambaram. He was the one who had retrieved *Thēvāram*, the collection of hymns sung by the *Saiva* Saints (*Nāyanmārs*). He built the massive *Bruhadīśwara* Temple at *Thanjāvūr* which is an architectural marvel and which has been declared a world heritage monument. He had invaded upto Kalinga (present Orissa) and defeated the *Chālukyās* who were ruling the territory between Godavari and Krishna rivers, invaded and concurrēd *Lankā* and the large number of islands in the Arabian Sea and thus acquired the title *Rājarāja* (his original name was *Aruṇmozhi Varman*).

Despite all the greatness and glories he had attained he remained humble in the thought that all that he had achieved was the prasād from *Īśwara* and therefore constructed the temple about which everything is big. The name of the presiding deity is *Bruhad-Īśwara*, the name of his consort *BruhanNāyaki* and the temple itself is called *Bruhadh Īśwaram*. All over the world it has come to be called the Big Temple, the great Pagoda of *Thanjāvūr*. In the stone inscription the name given is '*Rājarājēśwaram*'. One of the names of *Ambāl* is *Rājarājēśwari*. Here because of *Rājarājan Īśwara* also got the name *Rājarājēśwara*. The Nandi in the temple too is big - has come to be called the Big Bull of *Thanjāvūr*. Even the deities in the corridor of the temple (*prākāram*) are of 8 to 10 feet height. The size of the lingam is huge (*Mahālingam*, *Mahādēvā*) and the *vimānam* (canopy) over the lingam is more than 200 feet height and he named it *Dakṣiṇa Mēru*. *Mēru* must be understood here as Kailas. It means Kailas of the South.

Rājarāja was great in several ways - valourous deeds and exploits, bhakthi, enormous amounts he had spent for the jewels adorning the *Mūrthis*, the money he had spent for those who rendered various kinds of service in the temple. He was also great in having left a permanent record of these in the form of stone inscriptions. He was a great administrator who had organized units of administration which were highly democratic with a original type of elections designed by him. He had arranged for lands to be surveyed and registered. Streets were named and door numbers were allotted to houses.

But greater than all these and more important is that he had considered both Tamil and Sanskrit as his two eyes and nurtured both the languages. One feels hurt by the needless language controversies of these days, especially the attempt to create an atmosphere of hostility to Sanskrit. There is no doubt that *Rājarāja* was essentially the son of Tamil soil. He had retrieved the *Śaiva* scriptures - *Thēvaram* and Thirumurai. He had also appointed Tamil scholars who were experts for reciting the *Saiva* hymns in temples. He had appointed fifty of them in the Big temple.

But this is only one side of his great personality. The other side is that he had great respect for Sanskrit, *Vēdhās*, the *Vēdhic* way of worship etc. He had arranged for *pūjā* in the temple only according to the *Śāsthrās*. He felt bound by the *Śāsthrā* rule that for his Big temple the appropriate lingam would be the '*Bānalingam*' of the Narmada region. He therefore went to the Narmada region along with 64 others and brought the huge lingam. He commenced his first stone inscription in Sanskrit.

Ēthath viswanirūpaśrēṇi mouli

Rājarāja provides the most powerful repudiation of the Aryan-Dravidian race theory of the Westerners which was part of their policy of divide and rule.

Rājarāja guided his people towards religion and god through simple means - recitation of the *Vēdhās* and the *Thēvāram* in temples and through all art forms like music and dance. When we are proud of him today and organize celebrations in his memory and honour we should imbibe his devotion to Lord and his great regard for the two branches of the culture of our Bharath. If it was possible for him to do everything on a grand scale it is because he was helped by these two aspects.

When we hear that birthday celebrations for *Rājarāja* on a big scale are underway and that his statue is being installed hopes soar that people will realize the real greatness of *Rājarāja* and the composite culture that he had stood for.

May we all follow the path laid down by that great *Śivapādhasēkaran* and devote all arts to *Īswara* so that they develop on right lines, eschew all feelings of language differences and live in unity and love.

* * *

NOTHING CAN BE A BAR TO KNOWLEDGE

Several Janakas : The name of Sita's father was not Janaka! Janaka was the family name of all those who came in the line of 'Nimi' of the *Sōlar* dynasty which had ruled the kingdom of *Vidēha* with Mithila as the capital. Sita's father's name was *Śīradwaja*. Suffixing the family name he is to be called *Śīradwaja Janaka*. 'Śīram' means the plough. *Śīradwajan* means one who has the flag with the plough on it. Appropriate to his name Sita was found in the ground which was opened by ploughing. Sita means the path created by the tip of the moving plough.

Of the several Janakas belonging to the royal clan of Mithila, *Kēsīdhvaja* Janaka and *Kāṇḍikya* Janaka were two. They were paternal cousins. Their grandfather was Dharmadhvajān whose

sons were Amithadhvajar and Krithadhvajar. *Kēsīdhwajar* was Krithadhvajar's son and *Kāṇḍikyar* was Amithadhvajar's son. Dharmadhvajar is one who has Dharma as his goal and keeps aloft the flag of dharma. But the word also has the meaning 'a hypocrite'. The word got this meaning because of the view that one who does not observe the dharmas with humility but makes a show of it will be a hypocrite. But the Dharmadhvajar of the present story was not like that.

The general rule is that the eldest son is crowned the king of the entire kingdom. But sometimes the younger son also used to be given an independent share of the kingdom. When the younger son shows great valour, fights wars and annexes new kingdoms, the father used to give an independent share of the kingdom to such a younger son. *Sri Ramachandramūrthi* had no desire to rule and felt that if his brother ruled the kingdom it was greater than his own rule. But in the end he divided the kingdom of Kosala and crowned both Lava and Kusa kings of the two kingdoms. In addition to that he divided the kingdoms outside Kosala and gave them to the sons of Lakshmana, Bharatha and Sathrugna.

The fathers of *Kēsīdhwajar* and *Kāṇḍikyar* were kings of two independent kingdoms. Therefore *Kēsīdhwajar* and *Kāṇḍikyar* inherited those kingdoms respectively.

The kings in ancient times used to engage themselves in wars valorously and in accordance with kshatriya dharma they used to expand their territories. They administered their kingdoms according to *Śāsthrā*. Although they were thus engaged in the karma *mārga* they had *Vēdāntha Jnāna* also. When the son came of age they would make him king, go to the forest, do thapas and join the *Paramāthmā*. There were also kings who were totally unattached like water on the lotus leaf and had engaged themselves in *Vēdha vichāram* even when ruling. A lot of things are said in the *Bṛuhadārāṇyaka* Upanishad about one such Janaka.

KĒSIDHWAJAR

As between *Kēsidhwajar* and *Kāndikyar*, *Kēsidhwajar* was more learned in *Vēdānthā*. But in olden times people never gave up *anushtānās* as some people these days who gain bookish knowledge of *Vēdānthā* start saying 'Nothing will touch the *āthmā*; it is not amenable to ritual *karmās*' and give up *anushtānās*. But very rarely sometimes someone might be blessed with *Īswara*'s grace in a big way and he might attain '*āthma jnāna*'. But others had realized that if the *Vēdānthā* they had read had to become real experience they had to do *karmā* and bhakthi to eliminate the impressions (vasanas) of previous birth. Therefore they practiced the swadharma that had come to them by birth, did Vaidhika *karmās* and worshipped the Lord in a big way. That is, they started with what is prescribed in the '*karma kānda*' of the *Vēdhās* and then took to the '*jnāna kānda*'. Therefore *Kēsidhwajar* who had gained great scholarship in '*āthma Vidhyā*' in order to make it a real experience, conducted the affairs of his kingdom properly according to swadharma. He performed yajnas and followed other *anushtānās*.

* * *

ADHWAITHA JNĀNIS AND THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

The Janaka who is spoken about in *Bṛuhadārānyaka* Upanishad and Sita's father Janaka ruled their kingdom even after they had gained the experience of the Self (*āthmānubhūthi*). It will be surprising to find that several Adhwaitha *jnānis* who considered the world as *māyā*, the body and the mind as *māyā* achieved many things in the world, more than the 'Dwaithis' who think of these as real. The example of *Ādhi Śankara* is enough. He was the greatest Adhwaithi. But during his short span of life of thirty two years, what all had he done, touring the country from *Rāmēswaram* to the

Himalayas - how many debates he had conducted, how many *bāshyams* and *sthōthrās* he had written, how many *Mūrthis* and *Yantras* he had installed, how many *Mutts* he had established!

It was *Vidhyāranya* who was the head of one of *Āchāryā's* *Mutts* who had sown the seed for the Vijayanagar empire and brought about a revival. If *Śivāji* had established a Hindu empire it was due to the encouragement and guidance given by Samarth Ramadas who was a great Adhwaithi. In *Thanjāvūr* it was again *Gōvindhā Dikshitar* who was a great Adhwaithi who was responsible for the establishment of the rule by the *Nāyaks* and he was also the Prime Minister to the first three *Nāyak* kings. Therefore even though the Westerners who are not well informed say that because of the '*māyā* doctrine' of Adhwaitha Hindus have no interest in the world and therefore they surrendered the country to the Muslims and the British an impartial look at history will show that the truth is otherwise.

If it is asked how the Adhwaitha *jnānis* achieved so much in the phenomenal world the reply would be in the form of a puzzle that it was that Adhwaitha which gave the strength to achieve these things. If the doctrine of Adhwaitha is accepted that 'basically the world, body and the mind are *māyā* but they have the appearance of reality' then it will be seen that after putting this appearance into an order through *karmā* we should go to *jnāna*. At the same time since it is merely an appearance and not basic truth (*sathyam*) it is possible not to identify ourselves with it but look at it in a detached manner. It is only when we have the wrong notion that it is everything we develop a lot of worry to save it. Because of that, clarity of the mind gets reduced. One starts thinking why it cannot be saved even by violating dharma. That is, it becomes difficult to plan things properly. The body is based on the mind. Does not psychology say the same thing? When the mind loses its strength due to extreme attachments and also loses the moral strength,

bodily strength, enthusiasm, the power to act etc become reduced. The Adhwaithi is not affected like this. Although he may appear to be involved in worldly activities actually he is able to stand detached and look at them. It is therefore possible for him to plan things properly and execute them with a strength that does not get dissipated. This was how *Kēsidhwajar* was able to shine better than *Kāṇḍikyar* and make progress.

* * *

KĀṆDIKYAR

Kāṇḍikyar did not interest himself in *Vēdānthā* much. He was entirely a '*karma mārgi*'. Just as *Kēsidhwajar* was an expert in Brahma *Vidhyā Sāsthrā*, *Kāṇḍikyar* was an expert in '*karmānushtānam*' and the *sāsthrās* relating to them. In the *Rāja* dharma of olden times it was thought to be the duty of a king to defeat other kings and annexe their kingdoms and become a '*Sārvabhauman*'. In accordance with this concept, *Kāṇḍikyar* prepared to annexe the kingdom of his cousin *Kēsidwajar*. *Kēsidwajar* also launched a counter-attack. War ensued between the two and *Kēsidwajar* was victorious. *Kāṇḍikyar* escaped to the forest with his ministers and all his paraphernalia. In the forest he continued to perform yajna. *Kēsidwajar* also started performing a number of yajnas now that he was free from enemy fear.

* * *

THE STORY TAKES SHAPE

It is only when there is some obstruction to what is being done a story takes shape. Such an obstruction came in the way of *Kēsidwajar*'s performance of yajna. The cow which was yielding the milk used for the *hōmas* was killed by a tiger.

Killing of a cow is something which no Hindu can bear. This cow was giving milk for yajnas. It was all the more reason that

Kēśidwajar was seriously upset. His *Vēdānthā* came to his aid. He thought 'whatever has happened has happened. What is the use of feeling sorry for it?'

Personal sorrow can be removed by such *Vēdānthic* thoughts. But if a cow that was giving milk for yajna dies in the midst of a yajna it is a blemish according to *sāsthrās*. How to remedy it? The *sāsthrās* also lay down the remedial action for the blemish (*dōsha*). The *dōshas* have to be removed only by taking those actions. *Kēśidwajar* asked his scholars about the *prāyaschitham* (remedy) that he had to do. Although he himself was observing *karmānushtānā*, since he had specialized particularly in Brahma *Vidhyā* perhaps there were not those who had expert knowledge of *karmānushtānās* who could guide him regarding the *prāyaschitham* to be done.

Our ancestors had great awareness of sathyam and humility. Therefore if they did not know something they would admit it and without hesitation they would go to those who knew it and learn it from them. We can see several instances of this in the *Vēdhās*, Upanishads, *Ithihāsas* and *Puranās*. The scholars advised *Kēśidwajar* to go to a noble Brahmin by name *Kasēru* who they thought would be knowing the *prāyaschitham*. When *Kēśidhwajar* approached *Kasēru* he told him that he did not know the *prāyaschitham* and advised him to go to *Bhārgava*. If we were in *Kasēru*'s position we may think 'the king himself thinks that I know it and is asking me. Let me tell him something'. *Kasēru* did not do it.

Kēśidhwajar went to *Bhārgava*. He too told him that he had no knowledge of it and advised him to go to Sunakar. In this circumstance we will think that ārepeating '*Gōvindha nāma*' three times is enough *prāyaschitham*' and leave matters at that. But *Kēśidhwajar* who was king was very sincere in doing the *prāyaschitham* for the death of a cow.

PRĀYASCHITHAM : LORD'S NAME AND VAIDHIKA KARMA

If it is asked whether repeating '*Gōvindha nāma*' is not *prāyaschitham* the answer is 'yes'. We have to take recourse to that big *prāyaschitham* only when we are unable to do any other *prāyaschitham*. A powerful medicine is not administered in the first instance. The power of medicine is gradually increased if necessary. In the same manner, only if we are not able to do the *prāyaschitham* prescribed in the *sāsthrās* or we find that such *prāyaschitham* is not effective we have to take recourse to the great remedy of '*Nāma*' and do surrender. Then only *Gōvindhā* (the Lord) will cleanse us of the *dōsham*.

Suppose we go to a house, tired and extremely hungry and we want to take a bath and eat well. Suppose the people in the home say 'just recite Govinda *nāma*. It is equal to taking bath - '*Gōvindhēthi Sadā snānam*'. The mention of '*nāma*' itself is said to be more than 'amruth'. Therefore keep reciting Govinda *nāma* instead of taking food', how would we feel? We will only feel angry instead of realizing the greatness of the *nāma*. It is only when we really understand the greatness of the *nāma* that it will act as a *prāyaschitham* for all things.

* * *

ASKING THE ENEMY FOR PRĀYASCHITHAM

Kāṇḍikyar went to *Sunakar*. *Sunakar* threw a bombshell. He said 'you are thinking that *Kasēru*, *Bhargava* and I are great and therefore you are asking us. None of us know it. There is only one person who knows it. That is *Kāṇḍikya Janaka* whom you have driven away to the forest. Since he is thorough in *Dharma sāsthrās* he knows everything about *karmā*. So he must definitely be knowing this.

Others would have thought 'how can I go to my enemy and ask for this? Even if I ask him will he tell me?' They would have

concluded that all possible efforts had been made and only *japā* should be undertaken as *prāyaschitham*. But *Kēsīdhwajar* did not do so.

Kēsīdhwajar decided to go to *Kāṇḍikyar* thinking 'Let him be the greatest enemy. He knows what I want to know. If I am following dharma and *āchāram* correctly I must go to any one who knows the remedy and try to know it from him. If I do not succeed in my efforts and if he continues to show enmity that is his concern. But irrespective of whether he will tell me the *prāyaschitham* or ridicule me I must go to him and ask him.'

Kēsīdhwajar told Sunakar 'Maharishi! You have given me valuable information. I am grateful to you. I will immediately go to *Kāṇḍikyar*. If I go to him with all my paraphernalia he may think that I have gone to him to take him captive and he may hide himself. Therefore I shall go alone. Since I will be alone it does not matter even if he kills me. If a life is sacrificed in the interest of a *yajna* then the fruit of having completed the *yajna* will materialize. Let it happen that I complete this *yajna* which has been interrupted due to the death of the cow by giving my life and sacrifice. Or if he tells me the *karmā* for *prāyaschitham* it will be well and good'. *Kēsīdhwajar* immediately left for the forest.

A king went to the forest all by himself not minding even death if it occurred to him because of his great faith in *karmānushtānā*. Another thing to be noted here is the attitude of humility due to which a king is prepared to go to the enemy to gain knowledge. Normally, when we want to gain knowledge in a particular field we will first think about the person from whom we have to gain it. If such knowledge can be got only from one whom we do not like or who is of a lower status than us we will think 'how to go to this person' and give up our efforts. The (Tamil) saint poet *Thiruvalluvar* has said it is immaterial who says a thing but we

should imbibe the truth in what he says. We see this noble attitude in *Kēsīdhwajar*'s story.

Kēsīdhwajar stopped the yajna half way through and was running about to know the *prāyascitham*. When a yajna is commenced the one who performs it (*yajamān*) should remain with 'dikshai' (not having a shave) till the yajnam is completed and he takes 'avabrutha *snānam*'. He should also wear the black deer skin (*Krishnājanam*). There are several other restrictions. Even if he feels itching he should not scratch with his hand but use only the deer horn for doing it. Therefore *Kēsīdhwajar* was full of hairs and a long beard and wearing the deer skin. It was in this form he went to the forest.

Just as Lakshmana became angry on seeing the approaching Bharatha in the forest *Kāṇḍikyar* also became angry on seeing *Kēsīdhwajar*. Although *Kēsīdhwajar* went alone unlike Bharatha who had gone with his paraphernalia *Kāṇḍikyar* still became angry because he had a doubt that there was some plot in his coming alone like that.

Kāṇḍikyar addressed *Kēsīdhwajar* angrily : 'Kesidhwaja! I have understood that you have come in this form in the thought that I will join you and then you can finish me off at a suitable time. I will now be ahead of you. Look! I shall use my bow and arrows now only and finish you. If you try to act cunningly you will not succeed. Since our *Rāja* dharma permits the killing of a deer itself I will kill you who have come covering yourself with deer skin.

Kēsīdhwajar spoke these words in reply with great emotion : 'Look *Kāṇḍikya*! Do not be hasty. I promise you that I have not come to kill you. I have come to learn a particular Dharma *sāsthram* which you alone know. I have come unarmed. Please help me by giving the knowledge as alms. I came to know from you something important for completing the yajna. In case I am unable

to know it from you instead of leaving the yajna incomplete I am prepared to give up my life. Therefore, either you give up your anger or shoot your arrow. I welcome both'.

The moment *Kēsīdhwajar* said that he had gone to him to know from his something which he only knew *Kāṇḍikyar*'s doubt and anger vanished.

* * *

INDIAN CULTURE

These days we talk a lot about Indian Culture. It is actually this: even at the risk of one's life one obtains knowledge from whichever source it is available and similarly one passes on his knowledge to another who is fit to receive it according to *sāsthrās* even if he faces risk to his life from the other person. The reason why our culture has been praised all over the world as a knowledge-based culture is that whenever a person fit to receive knowledge of something is available the doors of such knowledge are freely open to him. There is also the converse to this. If it was felt that a person to receive the knowledge did not deserve to receive it our ancients would not pass it on to him even if they had to lose their lives.

* * *

GURU DAKSHINĀ

When *Kāṇḍikya* decided to gift his knowledge to *Kēsīdhwajar* in a spirit of reconciliation *Kāṇḍikyar*'s ministers and others who were with him in the forest did not like it. They thought like this more out of their loyalty to the king. They told *Kāṇḍikyar* : 'Your enemy who robbed you of your kingdom has now come here alone. Should you not fight him and get back your kingdom? How can you give *upadēsam* of *Dharma sāsthrā* to such a person?'

But *Kāṇḍikyar* told them 'It is true that if I kill him according to your advice I will have the world under me. But, for him, the permanent peace of the other world will become assured because he has come here with faith and trust to know *Dharma Śāsthā* and he would have sacrificed his life in that cause. But if I block the doors of knowledge to him who has come with trust will not the doors of the other world be closed to me?

He told *Kēśidhwajar* 'You please ask your doubt about *Dharma Śāsthā*'. *Kēśidhwajar* explained the circumstances in which he had gone to him and what he wanted to know from him. *Kāṇḍikyar* knew the *prāyaschitham*. He told him everything without keeping back anything. Without any feeling that his enemy was going to benefit by his *upadēsam* he gave him *upadēsam* in the manner it ought to be done.

Kēśidhwajar returned to his kingdom a happy man. He did the *prāyaschitham*, completed the yajna and had the 'avabrutha *snānam*'. But he felt that there was something still incomplete despite his having completed the yajna after so much effort. He thought about it: 'We have completed the yajna without any shortcoming with regard to money or manthra. *Dakshiṇa* is the most important aspect of yajna. That too we have given liberally'. He then realized where he had failed. Although he had given *dakshiṇa* liberally to so many people he had forgotten to give *dakshiṇa* to *Kāṇḍikyar* who had given him *upadēsam* of the *prāyaschitham* without which he could not have completed the yajna. Till that is given the yajna would remain incomplete and he would also remain without satisfaction, he thought.

By relationship *Kāṇḍikyar* was his cousin. But politically he was his enemy. But now he wanted to treat him as guru according to the rules of dharma and give him *dakshiṇa*. This is the pride of place our country had given to the gifting of knowledge.

Kēśidhwajar did not decide on the *dakṣhiṇā*. He thought he would ask *Kāṇḍikyar* and would give him whatever he wanted. Therefore he again went to the forest. Previously he went with beard etc as the *yajamana* of *yajna*. Now that he had had his 'avabrutha *snānam*' he went as king.

When *Kāṇḍikyar* saw him coming as a king he thought 'Oh! He has learnt the *prāyaschitham* from us and completed the *yajna*. Since it is laid down that during the period of the *yajna* one has to be 'sāthvik' he came to us as a simple person. Now that his job is done he is coming again to kill me'. Thus thinking he took out his bow and arrows and got ready for a fight.

Kēśidhwajar stopped him as he had done on the previous occasion. He told him 'My dear, I have come to you to give you *sambavana* and not to harm you. Do not mistake me. You had helped me to complete the *yajnam*. I have come to offer you whatever *dakṣhiṇā* you want'.

Kāṇḍikyar consulted those around him about what *dakṣhiṇā* he should ask for. They were of the view that it was the opportunity to get back his kingdom. Some of them went a step further and suggested that he should ask not only for his own kingdom but *Kēśidhwajar*'s kingdom also.

After deep consideration *Kāṇḍikyar* thought 'what made *Kēśidhwajar* come to me to ask for *prāyaschitham* even at the risk of his life and again made him come to me for giving me *dakṣhiṇā*? Is it not because of his knowledge of 'adhyāthma *sāsthrā*'? Although he may not just now have had *siddhi* in *jñāna mārga* and become totally identified with the *āthma*, his knowledge of *āthma Sāsthrā* has been of help to him. It is because of his firm conviction that *āthmā* is eternal he did not mind whether the life remains or goes. In the same manner his knowledge of *āthma Sāsthrā* has helped him to take the responsibility of ruling his kingdom lightly. It will be wise of me to leave the rulership to him only'.

‘All these days I have lived in this forest thinking that as and when the opportunity comes I should take back my kingdom. I have now given up that idea. I will not think of returning to the kingdom. I have decided that I should take ‘*āthma upadēsam*’ from him, do the *sāadhanā* and attain siddhi’, *Kāndikyar* said firmly.

He told *Kēsīdhwajar* with all humility : ‘The *dakṣiṇā* I want is ‘*Adyāthma Vidhyā*’. You please give *upadēśa* of the same to me’.

Kēsīdhwajar told him ‘Is it so? Have you thought about this well? This is the time when you can easily take back your kingdom. Think of it well and tell me’.

Kāndikyar told him ‘I have thought about it well. You have done me a great favour by taking the kingdom and freeing me from its worries. You are ruling it without any worries. It is *adhyāthma Śāstrā* which has given you that maturity. Therefore I want to have it. Instead of asking for wealth in accordance with the kshatriya dharma I am asking for *Vidhyādhān*. You must favour me’.

When suitable circumstances evolve some people attain sudden maturity of the highest level. Although it is the general rule that maturity is attained step by step, by the grace of *Īśwara* some people are able to cross several steps in a second. That is how *Kāndikyar* got the eagerness to practice *jnāna mārga* and the involvement for doing it due to the power of the *karmānushtānam* he has been observing and the purity of mind he had attained as a result.

* * *

SWORN ENEMIES BECOME GURU-ŚISHYA

True to our culture *Kēsīdhwajar* felt proud on hearing *Kāndikyar*. Instead of feeling jealous that he had gone a step above him *Kēsīdhwajar* felt proud of him. He told *Kāndikyar* ‘My dear,

although I have learnt a lot of 'āthma Śāsthā', instead of dedicating myself entirely to āthmā sādhanā I am in the position of having to continue with my swadharma, *karmānushtānam* etc to rid myself of desire and anger. Just as we eliminate our sins by this, only if we eliminate the previous *puṇya* also we can merge with the āthmā, the state in which there is neither sin nor *puṇya*. That is why even as I eradicate my sins by doing *karmās*, subjecting the body to suffering, I am eradicating *puṇya* also by giving the body the comforts of a royal life. This karma *yōga* and the enjoyment of royal pleasures (*rāja bhōgam*) have to continue for some more time. But you have achieved the *Vivēkam* to learn āthma Śāsthā from me to proceed to āthmā sādhanā. You are fortunate. Come, I shall teach you *Vēdānthā* in the prescribed manner'.

In *Vishṇu Purāṇa* in which this story occurs it is said that *Kēśidhwajar* referred to his enemy *Kāṇḍikyar* as 'Kula Nandanān' - a descendent who gives happiness to his clan. Then he gave all the *Upadēśa* to *Kāṇḍikyar*.

There is no limit to the pride of place given in this country to āthma *jñāna*. That is why two people who were sworn enemies became *Guru-sishya*.

Kāṇḍikyar absorbed the *Upadēśa* well. *Kēśidhwajar* who was pleased with this asked him 'what more should I do for you?'

With the same love *Kāṇḍikyar* told him 'What is there still left for you to do for me? You have shown me the limitless 'āthma *swarūpam*'. You have done all that needs to be done for my spiritual welfare. Now you can return to your kingdom'. Then *Kāṇḍikyar* did the *sādhanā* appropriate to the *upadēśam* he had received and attained 'Brahma Nirvanam'. *Kēśidhwajar* also attained *mōksha* after his sins and *puṇyas* were destroyed by *karmās*.

* * *

THE LESSONS OF THE STORY

This story from *Vishṇu Purāṇa* shows several noble goals. Instead of being under the illusion that mere learning is knowledge gained by actual experience, striving hard and making it real life experience; each one to do the swadharma laid down for him; showing whole-hearted bhakthi and *śraddhā* in the *anushtānā*; to try to learn dharma even at the risk of one's life; to think of the gain for the *āthmā* as greater than a kingdom etc.

More than all these, without blocking the gate to knowledge, one should obtain it from anyone who is qualified to give it without consideration of personal likes and dislikes. In the same way knowledge must be passed on to anyone who is fit to receive it without considerations of personal likes and dislikes. This story is a great example to show that it is not only love for which the door is not blocked but also knowledge and this is what people of this Bharat followed. If the thought comes that knowledge must be given to all that is also due to love.

* * *

WHERE THE GĪTĀ, THE BIBLE, THE KURAI SPEAK ALIKE

In the *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* defines the 'Parama Yōgi', that is a *yōgi* who has attained the highest state. There are those who are experts in breath control, those who sit alone in a cave and practice *sādhanā*, those who keep fasting for months and those who successfully practice the Kundalini *yōga* etc. *Bhagawān* does not refer to any of them as 'Parama Yōgi'. What, according to *Bhagawān*, are the characteristics of a Parama Yōgi? : says the Lord,

*Āthmoupamyēna sarvathra samam pasyathi yō (a)rjuna
Sukam vā yadhi vā dhukkam sa yōgī paramō Mathah*

(VI-32)

‘Arjuna! It is my considered view that one who, by comparison to his own self, looks at happiness and distress everywhere in the same manner, is a ‘Parama Yōgi’.

Āthmoupamyēna - means ‘taking oneself for comparison’. This is what is expressed to some extent by the Golden Rule of the Bible, namely ‘Do unto others as thou wilt be done’ - we should do to others the way we want them to do to us.

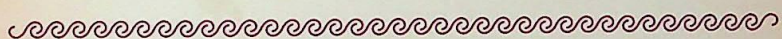
These days when we do not go anywhere near *yōga*, what do we think? We think ‘our difficulties must be removed by others. If we are poor others should help us liberally. If we are sick others should treat us. If we feel that a job is burdensome we should pass it on to others’. By completely changing this situation, by putting the other person in our place, if we decide to remove his difficulty whatever it may be that is ‘*āthmoupamyam*’. We now think that we must become happy even if the other person has to be put to trouble for this. If we interchange the place of ‘me’ and ‘the other person’ that is ‘*āthmoupamyam*’. From *Thirukkural* we learn that if we develop love ‘*āthmoupamyam*’ will come on its own. Without showing love for all others when we love ourselves we think that whatever does good to the other person should come to us. But when we develop noble love this attitude will change completely and we will think that we should give to the other person all that is ours. To convey the meaning ‘all that is ours’ *Thiruvalluvar* says (in his *Kural*) ‘our bones too’. That is he says that just as *Dādisi* Maharishi gave his backbone for use by *Dēvās*, sacrificing even our life is love.

I said that according to *Gītā* we should look at happiness and distress everywhere in the same manner. This can be taken to mean one’s own happiness and distress instead of that of the world. If we look equally at the world’s happiness and sorrow, whenever the world is afflicted by distress there will be no scope for us to show our love and make the world happy. What

Bhagawān means is that one should consider his own happiness and sorrow with equanimity and carry out activities for the good of the world. This is what he calls 'loka sangraham'. It is only for this 'loka sangraham' that he has prescribed that even the *jnānis* who have realized that this world is *māyā* and are not in need of *karmā* for their sake should do the *karmās*.

Viewed from the state of *jnāna* both happiness and sorrow will be the same. Happiness will be seen to be false and so also sorrow. Still when *Īśwara* creates such a thing as world view for the sake of love, even when the *jnāni* is not touched by such happiness and sorrow it will look as if he also feels happy at the happiness of the world and feels compassion when it suffers. When it suffers he will come forward to even sacrifice himself in order to remove the suffering. When we say that he will sacrifice himself we mean his body. But he knows that his body is unreal.

* * *



MATTERS DIVINE





ĀTHMĀ AS WITNESS (ŚAKSHI)

It has been the practice even among ordinary people to assert 'I say this with God as witness'. *Paramāthmā* is witness to all that happens in the universe including very small things.

The *āthmā* which *Vedānta Sāsthrās* speak of is in the actionless state. Yet in the same *sāsthrās* it is said that *Āthmā* is a 'mere witness'. But that does not mean that the *Āthmā* is 'witnessing' something in the manner of a witness in the practical world. There is nothing other than the non-dual *Āthmā* and therefore it does not perform the action of watching anything.

Why then is it referred to as a witness? The reason is: A witness performs no action. He does not directly participate in whatever is happening. Yet, whatever is happening happens at the place where he is. He looks at what is happening without participating in it or being affected by it. Since there is no place where the *Āthmā* does not pervade, everything in this world happens in its presence. Yet the *Āthmā* has no part in it. It is only from this point of view, that *Āthmā* is referred to as a witness.

There are two major differences between a person who is a witness and the *Āthmā* which is referred to as a witness.

First : The *Āthmā* does not 'see' in the manner of a person who witnesses something. The *Āthmā* is actionless. Even seeing is an action. The characteristics of a witness are said to be two - that he is merely a spectator and not a participant. Only 'not being a participant' applies to *Āthmā*. The *Āthmā* is not a 'spectator'. This is a significant difference.

Another difference is : it is not that something will happen only if a witness is present. A lot of things happen without anyone witnessing them. Incidents take place and sometimes a person may witness a happening. However in the case of *Āthmā* we find that it is the basis for all actions. It is the basis for the whole world and for

all the living beings. None of these will be there if *Āthmā* is not there. If these are not there none of their actions will be there.

It is something funny. The *Āthmā* is actionless and it has nothing to do with any action. Yet no action is possible without it. But the human witness is never the supporting power for the action he witnesses.

If it is analysed deeply it will be seen that *Āthmā* is not even a 'Sākshi'. The state of being the *Āthmā* is the true and eternal state. It is *Māyā* that deludes us and does not allow us to realise it. Therefore we have to do *sādhana* to dispel this *Māyā* and if there is *Īśvarā*'s grace we attain the *samādhi* state in which we are only the *Āthmā*. In this state there will be no world, no living beings, time or action. When there is no universe and no concept of time, to say that 'wherever there is action there is *Āthmā*' makes no sense. When there is no action to say that *Āthmā* is the basis of all action is meaningless. If a palace is conjured up is it necessary that it should have a foundation which is real?

Therefore if we understand the Adhvaitha *Śāstrās* properly it will be seen that it is not the 'real' *Āthmā* that is referred to as 'Sākshi'. Has not that *Āthmā* become a *jīvā* like us because of *Māyā* or something else? The *Āthmā* which in reality does not change has not transformed into *jīvā* either. Even if it has not changed does it not appear to have changed? In a step by step effort to reveal the real *Āthmā* (which has no connection with *Māyā*) to the *jīvā* which is completely sunk in *Māyā*, at a sufficiently high stage but which is below the ultimate state of '*Āthma Sākshāthkāram*', it will be said 'although the universe, action, individual *jīvā* etc may appear to exist and even seen your *Āthmā* is not involved in any of these but remains as a spectator, a mere witness. It is the basis for the things which are seen'.

At a still higher state it is said 'There is nothing like observing. Action takes place on its own. It happens because of

Āthmā's presence. But there is no such thing as *Āthmā* seeing it'. When a painting is drawn on a canvass does the canvass participate in the act of what the painting describes? This too is like that.

Finally when the whole truth is shown it will be said 'there is no action either. There is nothing like a basis or a source of power. There is nothing like '*Āthma Śākthi*' It is only '*Āthma Śān̄thi*'. The peace of *samādhi* is ultimate'.

Starting with *sākshi* I have gone into *Vēdhānthā* and metaphysics. I wanted to tell a story. You may or may not have as much taste for metaphysics as you have for stories. Yet metaphysics leads us to the ultimate truth. It is the eternal wealth that the *Āchāryā* has bequeathed to us. Let me now move on to the story part.

* * *

SĀKSHI - IN PRACTICE

In the stage in which a universe appears to be there with living beings in it, it is *Īswarā* who 'controls' all of it according to his plan. We say that 'Without him not even an atom moves'. Just as *Āthmā* was referred to as *Sākshi* and later this statement was negated we have to say something different about the statement that 'without him not even an atom moves' - different but not entirely opposite. We have to amend it a bit. If we say 'Everything is his work, everything is *Śiva*'s action' it would mean that theft, fraud, murder, robbery, forgery, false litigation, - all these are of his doing and therefore none of this is wrong. In day-to-day affairs there will be no difference between *dharma* and *adharma*. That is the need for an amendment. What is the amendment? It is true that he is the very source of everything, good and bad. From a small insect to an elephant, to a huge whale everything owes its life source - *Śakthi* - to him. Yet all the actions performed by every

one are not performed directly by him. He has given a mind to the *jīvās* and thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes, etc which make the individual think that he is different from him (*Īśwarā*). Though all these are his various forms he is staging a drama with his wonderful power of *Māyā* due to which these people have forgotten their original form (*swarūpa*) - which is himself. However it is not as if he has not shown them the way to get out of the *Māyā* and become one with him. He has created good and bad and deludes the mind of the *Jīvā* to run after the bad - he who has also given the *Jīvā* the buddhi, the intellect to discriminate between the good and the bad and the power to decide that he should take to the good. It is like climbing a slippery pole. One goes up the pole because of the firm determination of the buddhi but slips again and again because of temptations of the mind and *Īśwarā* enjoys it as if it is an entertainment. At least after several births he ensures that the *Jīvā* does not slip down any more because of the temptations of *Māyā*. He allows that *Jīvā* to climb up and reach himself, the *Īśwarā* in his most auspicious form and the abode of all that is good. Thereafter even that form of *Īśwarā* vanishes and the *Jīvā* is merged into one with the Brahman - the *Nirguna Swarūpa* - because of his grace. In his infinite compassion he has not only given the *Jīvā* the intellect to discern what is good and what is bad but also given him the *Śāstrās* which give him the right guidance. He appears as various *avatāras*, he has created great souls and *āchārya puruṣhas* (who are in essence himself) and sent them to this world, demonstrates to the world by leading life according to the code of conduct ordained in the *śāstrās* and he helps people acquire a taste for leading a life of righteousness.

Yet he has created this illusion that people should feel they are in control of their action and are responsible for it and become happy when they do good and unhappy when they do wrong. He plays this drama till such time he takes them into his grace and

reaches them to a state of peace which is actionless when the *Jīvā* becomes free from likes and dislikes and leads a life as an instrument of *Īśwarā*. '*Karmā Theory*' which is widely accepted around the world and is also spoken about even in other religious paths, is the very foundation of our religion. It is founded on the basis that the *Jīvan* is the *karthā*. (the doer). If we hold *Īśwarā* as the *karthā* for all actions then we cannot separate good deeds, acts of *pūṇya* that lead to happiness and bad deeds, acts of sins, that lead to sorrow and unhappiness.

Therefore we must understand this. It is indeed true that all of us, ordinary people as we are, in the manner in which we conduct our daily lives we owe our strength and very existence to *Īśwarā*. In that sense it is true that 'without him nothing moves.' Yet when we take into account our individual actions we who are the *jīvās* must take responsibility for our actions as the *karthās*.

What does he do after making us indulge in these various actions? He is simply watching everything we do. He is a '*sarva vyāpi*'. Says the *Gītā*:

Sarvathah pāṇipādham thath sarvathō(a)kshi śirōmukam
Sarvathah śruthi mallōkē sarvamāvṛuthya thishtathi
 (XIII. 14)

The point of importance to us is that he is '*Sarvathōkshi*' - that is he has his eyes everywhere. Because he has his eyes everywhere, he is the biggest '*Sākshi*', as he sees whatever we do wherever in the world. In the *Sahasranāma*, one of the many names given to *Ambāl* is '*Viśwasākshinī*'. In the *Trisathī* there is '*Karmādhisākshinī*'.

No one can do anything without being watched by that *Parāśakthi*, the *Paramāthmā*.

We cannot say 'let him see, so what?' and continue to act with impunity. Remember, he is not a mere witness, some one who

just sees and gives a statement as a witness. He is also the judge who gives the judgment on our actions. He decides whether it should be a reward or punishment and awards it. If we were to observe from a more evolved stage - *pāramārthika* - he is also the one who performs all the actions and therefore guilty of it. Since that stage is beyond us now, we avoid metaphysics and deal with the story. It is enough if we understand he is *Paramāthmā*, the witness and the judge.

Because he is the witness and the judge there is no chance of the judge pronouncing judgment based on a false witness. No one can fool this witness-judge. Many crimes don't even reach the court. But no one can escape from this biggest court of all.

It is this awareness that has led society on the right path from early days, at least to this extent. Because we remember from time to time that the '*sarva sākshi*' is watching us all the time, we try to keep away from acts of sin.

Whether we believe it or not, we realize the power of using the words 'God as witness' to convince some one. We know that nothing else has so much power. This is the biggest weapon to make some one who is not convinced to believe our words! We use expressions such as 'I am telling you with god as my witness', '*Ākāśavānī, Bhūmā Dēvi sākshi*'! Rather than declaring 'I tell you honestly' we gain credibility only when we invoke 'god as witness'. Even those who do not give credence to our words/promise, believe in the 'god as witness' declaration in the belief that 'he will not do wrong after involving God into it'.

This '*sarvavyāpi*', '*sarvasākshi*' is not visible to us. Therefore we use one of his forms as witness and engage in important activities. For example when we enter into an agreement in the presence of such a witness we will be afraid of violating it.

In our *Vēdhic* religion the important form of god, is Agni. That is why we keep Agni as *sākshi*. We perform the wedding- the

life long contract - of the bride and the groom in the presence of Agni, that is Agni as *sākshi*.

* * *

SRI RAMA AND 'AGNI SĀKSHI'

Although Agni *Sākshi* is generally used only in marriages there is an unusual event that appears in *Rāmāyaṇā*, where friendship (*sakhyam*) was solemnized with Agni *Sākshi*. Today there are many who say 'I say this with Sri Rama as the *Sākshi*'. That divine Rama in his role as an ordinary human being used Agni as *sākshi*. You might have heard of '*Sugrīva Sakhyam*' in *Rāmāyaṇā*.

After Sita was abducted, Rama and Lakshmana reach *Kishkindhā* searching for her. *Hanumān* meets them. Just as Rama had lost his kingdom and come to the forests, *Hanumān*'s leader *Sugrīva* lost his authority and had come to Rishyamukha Parvatha from *Kishkindhāpūri* and was hiding there. Like Rama he too had lost his wife. Generally there is a lot of mutual understanding and empathy amongst those who have similar problems due to which an idea occurs to both 'why not we help each other?' The reason for *Sugrīva*'s problems was his elder brother *Vāli*.

Today if we say *Mahāvīra*, most people think of *Vardhamāna Mahāvīra*, who founded 'Jainism'. Earlier, *Mahāvīra* always referred to Rama.

'That *Mahāvīra* should slay *Vāli* and solve all the difficulties of *Sugrīva*. In return, *Sugrīva* should use his army of monkeys to scour the world and find where Sita was, and assist Rama in slaying *Rāvaṇa* and his kin'. Rama, Lakshmana and *Hanumān* outlined such a plan and *Hanumān* carried on his shoulders Rama and Lakshmana to meet *Sugrīva* to ratify the plan.

Here a question may arise : *Jatāyu*, Rama and Lakshmana had come to know that *Rāvaṇa* had abducted Sita. *Sugrīva* and

Hanumān too knew this because when *Rāvaṇa* flew over *Rishyamukha*, they had seen him and *Sita* had dropped her jewellery tied in a bit of her cloth so that they could show it to *Rama* to identify that it was indeed *Sita* that they had seen. Should they not have guessed that he would have kept her in *Lanka* and marched there to either fight or to solve the problem peacefully? What was the need to send people in all four directions and comb the whole world to find *Sita*?

The reason is: The mind of the *rākshasas* is full of trickery. Their actions always involve intrigue and deceit. *Rāvaṇa* appearing as a *sanyāsi*, *Sūrpanakā* appearing as a lovely lady (as per *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*) are all part of their grand deceit. In everything they do there is deceit, cunning, and cover up. *Rāvaṇa* ruled all the three worlds. So he was capable of hiding *Sita* anywhere he chose. Therefore it was important to undertake a search all over.

Coming back to the story, *Rama* and *Sugrīva* enter into a firm pact of friendship. Just as during '*Pānigrahaṇā*' in a marriage, *Sugrīva* thinks that if *Rama* held his hand the friendship would be formalized. Therefore he extends his hand to *Rama*. *Sugrīva* says to *Rama* '*Gruhyathām Pāṇinā Pāṇim*' (some what similar to what *Janaka* said to *Rama*, while asking *Rama* to hold *Sita*'s hand '*Pāṇim Gruhṇishva Pāṇinā*')

In our culture only the bride and the groom do *pānigrahaṇā*, that is holding hands but not relatives or friends. Out of great affection, one would occasionally hug a relative or a friend. Elders kiss the forehead of the youngsters. It is a practice among monkeys to hold the hands of each other. That is why *Sugrīva* extended his hand.

It was characteristic of *Rama* to understand with compassion any one's level, go down to it and move with that person. Therefore as desired by *Sugrīva* he holds his hand.

Though *Hanumān* was of the form of a monkey in reality there was nothing he did not know. He knew that Rama acted according to the *Dharma Śāstrās*. *Hanumān* thought that according to the *Dharmā* of the world, there was nothing better than invoking *Agni Bhagavān* as *sākshi* to solemnize the relationship between Rama and *Sugrīva* and made arrangements for it.

He knew very well that Rama was in fact *Mahāviṣṇu*. *Mahāviṣṇu* does not need *Agni* as a *Sākshi*. But he has appeared as Rama in human form to demonstrate the ideal way to lead life according to the *Śāstrās*. Therefore *Hanumān* thought that making Rama to have *Agni Sākshi* as other human beings do, would be apt and that Rama would be pleased that he had understood the purpose of his avatara.

Hanumān lighted a fire by snatching a few branches from a tree and rubbing them against each other and kept the fire between Rama and *Sugrīva*. Then the two went round the fire, like a bride and groom.

Sugrīva said 'Rama! We have become friends. From now on happiness or sorrow would be the same for both of us.' Rama too echoed the same sentiments.

There is a *ślōka* in which Valmiki expresses a beautiful thought when concluding this part.

Sītā kapīndhra kṣaṇāthāccharānām rājīva hēma jvalanōpamāni
Sugrīva Rāma praṇaya prasangē vāmāni nēthrāni samam spuranthi

There are two people who solemnised their friendship through 'Sakhya'. It was Rama and *Sugrīva*. As soon as they did it, apparently the left eyelids of three different people fluttered! One of the three had eyes like '*rājīva*' a blue lotus. Another had golden coloured eyes with a yellow and red combination. The third had eyes like the flames of a fire. The *ślōka* says that as soon as Rama

and *Sugrīva* formalised their friendship, the left eye-lids of the three persons fluttered.

Sita has eyes like the blue lotus. Just as the lotus always remains in water, her eyes were all the time in tears. Now with the 'Sakhya' having been formalised her days of tears will vanish and good times were ahead. If the left eye-lid fluttered for a lady it is considered a good omen, a sign of good times to come. For men the fluttering of the right eye-lid means good times. Sita's left eyes fluttered because the 'Sakhya' was going to bring good times for her. The left eye-lids of *Vāli* who was going to be slain soon and *Rāvaṇa* who would be slain some time later fluttered.

Rama who hailed from *Sūrya Vamśa* and *Sugrīva* who is a *Sūrya puthra*, attained all the comforts and glory by becoming friends with *Agni Sākshi* and by mutually helping each other.

* * *

WHEN THE GODS BECOME WITNESS

In several '*Sthala Purāṇās*' there are stories of *Īśwarā* having appeared as a witness to establish some truth. If there is a dispute between two persons and the one who is affected and who is in fact in the right is unable to produce evidence in his support he prays to the Lord and asserts 'The God in a particular temple, located in such and such place is my witness for the incident'. That God too will appear as a witness and establish the truth and ensure that truth and justice prevail.

* * *

SĀKSHI GAṆAPATHI

'*Sākshi Gaṇapathi*' is in *Śrīśailam*, about three miles away from where the *Jyōtirlingam* - the *Mallikārjuna Mahālingam* is located in the main temple of that *Mahākshētra*.

Today there are transport facilities to go to the *Śrīsailam* temple. Till the middle of the twentieth century, the path to the temple was a rough one and the devotees had to cross forests and hills to reach the place.

Śrīsailam is one of the twelve *Jyōtirilinga kshētras* and also a prominent *Śakthi Pīṭa*.

The Lord has located several *Mahākshētras* in places hard to reach as if to demonstrate that devotees would come to such temples no matter how difficult the path. Even Tirupathi, Badhri etc were difficult to reach. Even today to reach Sabarimala one has to go through a rough forest terrain over the last few miles.

Just as food will be properly digested and assimilated in the body only if we eat when we feel hungry only if we undergo such difficulties to reach a temple, will we get the fruits and joy of the *dharṣan*. While it is happy to know that many conveniences and amenities are being provided for the devotees in places like Tirupathi it is also sad to note that the people treat these '*kshētras*' as picnic spots. This is happening when people have already given up the rigours and disciplines required to lead a proper life.

There is an old saying 'The king metes out instant punishment but God will wait and do it'. This means that in God's sport punishments and rewards do not come in a hurry. It is we who, in our hurry for justice, ask whether God has gone to sleep or whether he does not have eyes etc.

People have been visiting *Śrīsailam* from early days, in spite of all the difficulties. The three famous *Śaiva* saints who had sung the *Thevāram* too have visited *Śrīsailam* and composed songs on it. Our *Āchāryā* too had travelled to this 'difficult-to-reach' place. To show that this is one place he likes very much, he says '*Sēvē Śrīgiri Mallikārjuna Mahālingam Śivalingitham*' in the fiftieth *śloka* of *Śivānanda Lahiri*. *Śrīgiri* is *Śrīsailam*. Because it was so difficult to

reach, the *Āchāryā* chose the place for solitary meditation. He asks in one place ‘‘When will all the creepers spread around my body, and birds’ nests hang from my ears when I am in *Samādhi* in the caves of *Śrīsailam*?’’

Because it was so difficult to reach the place *Paramēswarā* decided that devotees who went on a pilgrimage to *Śrīsailam* must be rewarded with more happiness in this and the other world than those visiting other pilgrim centres. However he is called ‘*Āsuthōshi*’ – some one who can be pleased easily, some one who will be pleased by simple *bakthi* even if it be pretended and will grant whatever boon one wishes for. When the *Kshīra Sāgara* – the Ocean of milk was churned Indira took away the *Airāvatham* and *Kalpaka Vruksha*. The Brahma Rishis took away the *Kāmadhēnu*. We know that *Mahāvishṇu* received *Mahālakshmi* and *Kausthubha*. All the *Dēvās* took ‘Amrutha’ – the nectar. But what did they do when they first encountered the most dangerous poison – the *Hālāhala* poison? All the *Dēvās* went to *Paramēswarā*, the *Āsuthōshi*, and pleaded with him ‘*Paramēswarā!* there is no one like you. You are the kindest, the most compassionate. Therefore please keep this poison inside you and don’t let it out.’’ He too swallowed the poison with pleasure. What is to be noted is that it was poison that came first. Only then did all the good things come starting from *Kāmadhēnu* and ending with Amrutha. The one to whom they surrendered when the poison came up – did they approach him when the good things came up? Yet *Paramēswarā* continued to bless them all.

In a household, if the father was too lenient, it is often the son who would remind him of times when he has to be firm and demanding. *Vignēswara* woke up in a similar manner now. ‘‘Even though father has decided that he will specially bless devotees travelling to *Śrīsailam*, he is also the one who will be easily pleased if devotees travelling to other places pray to him. After all is he not

the one who first said *Vāraṇāśī* is my abode, whosoever dies there will attain moksha? After that did he not declare other places to be equal to *Vāraṇāśī* and some places even somewhat superior to *Vāraṇāśī*? This should not happen in the case of *Śrīsailam*” *Vignēśwara* decided thus.

He went to his father and said ‘You shall not grant to others what you have decided to grant only to devotees who go on pilgrimage to *Śrīsailam*. You will grant such boons only to those for whom I provide witness. Since you are too kind even if some one falsely claims that he had been to *Śrīsailam*, you will grant him those special boons. To prevent this I will sit at the border of *Śrīsailam* and maintain a record of those genuine visitors. I will keep a record of their names, where they come from and date and show it to you. You grant your special boons to only those people’.

Paramēśwarā agreed ‘So be it!’.

‘*Sākshi Gaṇapathi*’ is located at the border of *Śrīsailam* and is known by the same name. His idol is a majestic one. He is in a sitting posture with one leg folded and other hanging down. In the top two hands he has ‘*Pasankusa*’ like all *Vignēśwaras*. Only in the lower hands there is an unusual difference. He has the palm leaf and a writing instrument, true to being *Sākshi Gaṇapathi*. The palm leaf and the writing instrument are for writing down the name, city, and date of visit of devotees – genuine visitors to *Śrīsailam*.

When we finish our pilgrimage to *Śrīsailam*, we must go and report to him at the border. The one to whom we normally pray at the beginning of anything, we now pray after the completion of something! We give him details about ourselves. He registers it in his book and thereafter confirms to his father ‘These people indeed visited *Śrīsailam*. I am the witness’. He stands guarantee for our visit with great kindness and enables us to earn the blessings of

Īśwarā. There is an expression 'I hold my sacred thread and tell the truth'. In this *Sākshi Gaṇāpathi*'s idol we can see the sacred thread distinctly. We can also see clearly the Sarpa Udhara Bandham - the snake belt around his generous tummy which indicates his state of *ānanda*!

He is not a witness who helps resolve disputes between human beings who have gone to court. He is a unique witness to those pilgrims who have taken great pains to visit *Śrīśailam*. He ensures that the pilgrims get *Īśwara prasād* and blessings commensurate with their great effort. He is a *sākshi* to the genuine pilgrim and ensures that he gets the blessings he deserves and not some one else. It is for this reason that he became a witness in *Śrīśailam* on his own accord. He is a self-appointed witness! He maintains details meticulously with his palm leaf and writing instrument.

There is another minor '*Dēvatā*' who keeps track of all activities of the people around the world. He is Chitragupta. It is true that the one God is the *Sarvasākshi* and the judge for all things. At the same time just as a king has various officers appointed to handle various departments and rules the kingdom through them, this '*Thrīlōkachakravarthi*' too has specific *dēvatās* for specific duties - the *Thrimūrthis* for the three acts of creation, protection and destruction, Saraswathy for learning, Lakshmi for wealth, Indra for rain, and so on. Chitragupta is the one assigned the task of keeping an account of all our actions; the one who judges our actions and gives the punishments is the Dharmaraja! Chitragupta is an accountant in the Yama Darbar. It is in his visual description that a palm leaf and writing instrument (pen) have been mentioned. In one of the main streets of *Kāñchīpuram* there is an unusual temple for him. As if to show that only based on his accounts does one go to Vaikunta or Kailasa as the case may be this temple is situated in between *Kailāsa Nātha Temple* and *Vaikuntha Perumā*

Temple. He is in the Utsava Murthi form along with his consort 'Karnāmbāl'. Interestingly there is a term called 'Karnām' (in Tamil) which means an accountant. It is appropriate that the wife of the accountant to 'Īswara Samrajya' is called Karnāmbāl!

* * *

SĀKSHI GŌPĀL

Let us now talk about some one who came from Mathura in the North to *Kānchīpuram* and subsequently settled in Orissa and is a permanent resident there. He is *Krishnā Paramāthmā*. He is referred to as *Sākshi Gōpāl*. Even the place where he is resident in Orissa is called *Sākshi Gōpāl*.

We call the abode of *Bruhadīswarar* as '*Bruhadīswaram*' (*Thanjāvūr*). Similarly *Kapalīswaram* is the place where *Kapalīswarar* resides. In the north however the practice is different. What is Rama in Sanskrit is 'Ramar' in Tamil for us. In North Indian languages it becomes Ram. *Bruhadīswarar* & *Bruhadīswaram* - both become *Bruhadīswar*. Similarly *Vaidhyānātham* is the place where *Vaidhyānāthar* resides. What they do is to have a single name for the Lord as well the place he resides in. Therefore it becomes '*Vaidhyānāth*'. Thus we have *Rāmnāth*, *Sōmanath*, *Triyambakēśwar* etc. *Sākshi Gōpālām* the place where *Sākshi Gōpālān* resides, both become '*Sākshi Gōpāl*'!

An old man and a young *brahmachāri* from *Kānchīpuram* went on a pilgrimage to *Vārāṇāsī* (*Kāśī*). On the way the old man fell seriously ill. The young man attended to him with great care. The old man got back to normal. Even after that he carried the old man on his shoulders during the rest of the pilgrimage because he did not want him to strain himself. They went to Mathura because *Krishnā* was the *Ishta Dēvathā* for both of them.

The idol of *Krishnā*, many other idols and temples that were there at that time are not there any more. They were destroyed by

the invaders. Therefore it is difficult to say to which temple these two went. The old man had *dharṣan* of his *Inshta Dēvathā*. He was overwhelmed by happiness. That joy became gratitude towards the young *brahmachāri*.

He was a very wealthy person and the *brahmachāri* was a poor orphan. The boy, though a Brahmin, belonged to a subsect considered slightly inferior to the old man's sect. Yet because the boy had gone out of this way to serve him and virtually brought him back to life and carried him physically on his shoulders he could have *dharṣan* of his *Ishta Dēvathā*, have a bath in Yamuna etc. Overcome by feelings of gratitude the old man said "Young man, it is because of you that my 'janma' has become fruitful. I shall give you my daughter in marriage and all my wealth".

The young man could not believe this. He said "Sir, all I did was to render some help that I could. Are you sure you want to give your daughter in marriage to me? Please do not make me dream about things beyond my reach and disappoint me later".

The old man's resolve became even more firm, because of the young man's comment. He said with great feeling "I will never let you down. I say this to you in the presence of God. This *Gōpālān* here is our witness." The *brahmachāri* was extremely happy. Thereafter both of them returned to *Kānchi*.

When he returned to *Kānchi* he saw his daughter who was very beautiful. He saw his house and thought about his wealth. He considered the boy's status. The moment he compared all this, the promise he made to the boy in Mathura just vanished.

When he kept postponing the marriage the boy took some courage and reminded him of his promise. The old man not only went back on his promise but started ridiculing the boy for talking about marriage with his daughter.

The *brahmachāri* also felt that the old man should not commit the sin of breaking a promise made with God as the witness. He realized that a poor orphan like him would never be able to win the argument with the old man. Therefore he appealed to the King of *Kānchīpuram*.

Just as the old man had said that people would laugh at the young man's claim, the King laughed. He knew the old man's status and family background. He could see the difference in status between the old man and the boy. Yet he called the old man to enquire about the whole thing because he wanted to be fair and conduct himself according to *Dharmā*.

At that the old man tried to wriggle out of the whole thing with some shrewd thinking. It was possible that the king would believe the young man's story and pronounce a judgment accordingly. Because the boy was poor and he was seen to be breaking his promise it will bring him a bad name. So he decided to bring up the difference in his caste and the boy's sub-caste. Then possibly the king might think 'Such a traditional old man would never have promised to give his daughter in marriage to a boy from a lower caste. Unless there is a reliable witness we cannot pronounce a judgment in favour of the boy.'

Those were times when disciplines based on caste differences were understood, appreciated and honoured. The old man's trick worked. "There is no witness. Therefore I dismiss the case" announced the King.

The *brahmachāri* thought : "How can he say there is no witness? I have God as the witness. I did not want to bring such an exalted matter to the court. If I keep quiet any longer the old man will be committing a sin and incurring God's displeasure." Driven by this feeling the young *brahmachāri* spoke.

"It is not as if there is no witness. The Lord of the Mathura temple is my witness. Even if I am a worthless orphan, that Lord of

Mathura who was close to the shepherds will consider my plight and appear here as my witness.” He said this with unshakeable conviction.

The King said, “Good. If that is so, go and bring him. If the Lord Himself appears in this court, we too will be blessed.”

The old man well-versed in *Śāstrās* and *Purāṇās* thought “Ha! Where will that *Gōpālā* come as a witness!” The young man, not so well read, much younger than him, crossed several thousand miles across forests and mountains and reached Mathura and went to the temple.

He called the Lord with great affinity “*Gōpālā!* come as my witness.” The *Swāmi* promptly said “I am awaiting your instructions” and started with him.

He is ‘*sarva-vyāpi*’. He could have easily appeared in the *Kāñchīpuram* court without making the young man walk thousands of miles. Why did he not do so, could be a question that may arise. It was the Lord’s intention to show that steadfast faith and *bakthi* will make a simple devotee walk those two thousand miles. The compassionate Lord will respond to such devotion and will himself walk thousands of miles, for the sake of his devotee.

He is the savior of his devotees. He is the most compassionate too. Yet he cannot resist indulging in a few tricks. Therefore he told the young man “I will come walking behind you. But you should never turn around to check if I am following you or not. If you did that I will stay put in that place as an idol.”

Goddess Saraswathi too stipulated a similar condition to Sri *Āchāryā* (*Ādhi Śankara*). It is she who became *Śāradhāmbālī* and installed herself in *Śrunggēri*.

The *brahmachāri* accepted *Gōpālā*’s condition. He started walking. *Gōpālā* too followed with the accompanying sound from

his anklets. The *brahmachāri* did not have to turn around because the sound was sufficient to indicate that the Lord was following him.

You might think that I will end the story with 'At some stage the *brahmachāri* turned around, and *Gōpālā* became an idol and stopped there and that is the place which came to be called as 'Sākshi *Gōpāl*'. *Gōpālā* does not act according to our expectations. He is a grand magician and always does things differently. He did not make the *brahmachāri* turn around, nor did he stop anywhere. He reached *Kānchīpuram* without any fuss. The King's court was just two miles away. Yet he did not go upto the court. He who had walked miles because of the poor *brahmachāri*'s devotion, did not wish to appear in the king's court. Therefore something interesting happened. The *brahmachāri* was overwhelmed with feelings of happiness, pride and a sense of awe that 'We are going to make that very Lord *Krishnā* our witness, by making him walk thousands of miles.' He just could not resist turning around to look at the Lord who was blessing him with infinite compassion. So he turned around to look at the Lord. At that very moment the Lord stopped at the border as an idol.

The *brahmachāri* however did not lose his heart. "All the people will understand the situation when they see this new idol which has appeared suddenly from nowhere. They will know the truth. When the Lord has walked a thousand miles, it is only appropriate that the King and the old man walk at least two miles to receive him and know the truth."

They came to see the Lord. *Gōpālā* performed his role as a witness for the *brahmachāri*. The King pronounced his judgment in favour of the *brahmachāri*.

The old man realized how fortunate he was to get as son-in-law some one who could make the Lord do his bidding. Therefore instead of waiting for the royal decree he whole-heartedly gave his

daughter in marriage to the *brahmachāri*. Thus everything ended well.

I had earlier mentioned that the Lord had found for himself a permanent place in Orissa. Here is the story about how and why he went from *Kānchīpuram* to Orissa.

Word spread in the North and Orissa about the story of 'Gōpāl as Witness' and that the Mathura *Gōpāl* had now become *Kānchi Gōpāl*.

The Lord of *Pūri Jagannāth* is '*Jagannāth*'. There was a King called *Purushōttama* there. The Lord too is known by that name. It is a practice for Kings to seek brides from other kingdoms. Accordingly it was arranged for King *Purushōttama* to marry *Padmāvathi*, the daughter of the then King of *Kānchi*.

Two names will automatically appear in the minds of devotees involved in *bakthi* and *sankīrthanam* (bhajan), the moment we mention *Jagannāth*. One is *Sri Krishṇa Chaitanya*. The other is *Jayadēva* who composed the famous *Gītā Govinda Mahā Kāvya*. His wife's name too is *Padmāvathi*.

One important reason why the King of *Pūri*, *Puroshothama* wanted to marry the princess of *Kānchi*, *Padmāvathi*, was that he could have the *dharṣan* of *Sākshi Gōpāl*. As soon as he saw him soon after his marriage he fell in love with the Lord, even forgetting the young bride. He requested his father-in-law to give him the idol of the lord.

Can a father-in-law refuse the request of his new son-in-law? The King of *Kānchi* gave the idol of the lord too to his son-in-law.

The son-in-law returned to his kingdom with his new bride and the idol of the Lord. *Sri Jagannātha Swāmi* was already in *Pūri* as the reigning deity. Therefore the king felt that *Sākshi Gōpāl*

should be installed in a different place where he could be the reigning deity. There was a small place of pilgrimage called Mukundapur named after *Krishnā* in his kingdom. However there was no major temple in the city next to it. The king then decided to install *Sākshi Gōpāl* in a newly constructed temple in that place.

That is the place of pilgrimage currently called '*Sākshi Gōpāl*'.

This *Sākshi Gōpāl* who moved from Mathura in UP to *Kānchīpuram* and finally settled in Orissa in a place named after him, is a witness to demonstrate that genuine national integration can take place only through bakthi when all of us come together as his children.

* * *

SĀKSHINĀYAKĒŚWARAR

Lord *Paramaśiva* too has been a witness in two places located in the *Thanjāvūr* District of Tamil Nadu. In one place he is called '*Sākshināyakēśwarar*'; in another he is called '*Sākshināthēśwarar*'.

Sākshināyakēśwarar is in a place called '*Avalivanallūr*'. It is a Tamil name derived from the Tamil words '*Aval Ival Nallūr*'. '*Aval*' in Tamil means 'that lady'. '*Ival*' means 'this lady'. '*Nallūr*' means 'a good place'. The Lord played witness to a devotee in this place and confirmed 'This lady is the same as that one' in this place. Hence the name '*Avalivanallūr*'.

Several years ago there lived a '*Gurukkal*' (*pūjāri*) in that place. He had two daughters. Both of them more or less looked alike. He got them married to two grooms from his own sect.

The elder son-in-law went on a pilgrimage to *Kāśi*. In those days such a pilgrimage would take years to complete. Therefore he returned after four years to his father-in-law's place.

In the meantime his wife had suffered an attack of smallpox and it was a miracle that she survived. However the illness left severe scars on her face and also had affected her eyes. She lost her hair and had become very dark. In fact she had become quite ugly to look at. She had changed so much that her husband who returned from *Kāśī* could not recognize her.

In the meantime the younger daughter had come to visit her parents. She had begun to resemble her elder sister. She looked almost exactly like how her sister was in her beautiful days before her illness.

The husband who returned from pilgrimage thought not only that his wife (who was affected) was not his wife but that his sister-in-law was his wife.

He thought that the younger sister who was affected was being passed on as his wife since she was not accepted in her in-law's place. He refused to accept his own wife.

He refused to listen to any one including the people from that village. He felt that they were speaking in favour of the Gurukkal who was living there for several years. Therefore he did not attach any value for them as witness.

The father-in-law had been performing puja six times a day in the local temple. He fervently prayed that the Lord should appear as witness and solve the problem.

He heard a voice saying 'Bring every one to the Sannidhi. We shall state the truth'. The father-in-law thus brought his son-in-law, his daughters and others in his family.

The Lord too pointed out to the elder sister who was affected by small-pox and told the son-in-law 'She is the one you married with Agni as *sākshi*.

Out of compassion the Lord did something unexpected. He told the elder sister who had suffered a severe effect of small pox and was also heartbroken due to her husband rejecting her, "Have a bath in this temple's holy pond. You will emerge more beautiful than you were before." And it so happened. The son-in-law now accepted his own wife. The family of the Gurukkaḷ was saved from embarrassment because of the Lord appearing as witness. Thereafter the Lord began to be called *Sākshināyakēśwarar*.

This story has been inscribed on the walls in the temple's inner precincts behind the sanctum sanctorum.

* * *

SĀKSHINĀTHĒŚWARAR

The name for *Īśwarā* is *Sākshināthēśwarar* in a temple in Thirupurambayam near Kumbakonam.

Although this place is located in the region which was formerly *Chōḷa Kingdom*, *Sākshinathaswāmi* has connected it with Madurai (a place in the former Pandyan Kingdom) and has shown national integration on a small scale between two regions.

The present story is about the sport of *Śiva* from Madurai (*Lord Sundarēśwara*). The moment we talk about Madurai we are reminded of the sixty four sports (*līlā*) of the Lord. The *Sākshinathar* story appears as the sixty fourth sport of Lord *Sundarēśwara*.

There was a trader in *Kāvīripūmpattinam*. He had given his sister in marriage to some one from his own caste in Madurai. She settled down well in Madurai in her husband's home and also gave birth to a boy. Thereafter for some reason her husband's family and her brother's family drifted apart and completely lost touch with each other.

A daughter was born to her brother, the trader in *Kāviripūmpattinam*. Immediately he remembered his nephew, her sister's son. "My sister's son must be about ten to twelve years old now. Even if the age gap is a bit more, I must give my daughter in marriage to him, so that the relationship remains intact."

After having decided thus, he did not act on it because he felt hesitant to revive the relationship that had drifted apart. By the time his daughter attained the marriageable age of those days both the trader and his wife had passed away.

This young girl of marriageable age was now an orphan. She however knew that she had a cousin and her father was keen that she should marry him. Because her father had decided thus, she had mentally accepted her cousin as her husband and started observing 'pātivrathya'.

The people of the village had a lot of affection for her and undertook to do what the father failed to do. They located the address of her cousin in Madurai and sent a message to him with all the details. He too arrived at *Kāviripūmpattinam*.

He had already married and had children. Yet he came because the practice of contracting a second marriage was an accepted one in the society in those days, particularly among the trading community. He therefore decided to help the girl settle her financial problems, go on pilgrimage to a few places with her, return to Madurai and marry her.

Accordingly he completed his work in *Kāviripūmpattinam*, and commenced his pilgrimage. The girl's bad luck too followed her.

They had to stay for a night at a place called *Thiruppurambayam*. Being tired and covered by dust all over, he had a bath in the temple well. Thereafter both of them got the

prasād from the temple, sat under the (vanni) tree, ate the *prasād* and slept in the temple corridor itself.

In the middle of the night he was bitten by a snake and he woke up screaming. She too woke up hearing his scream and rushed to him. His body was becoming blue because of the snake poison spreading fast. A little later there was no movement in his body. She understood that it was a snake bite and was completely shaken.

Though she had mentally accepted him as her husband, she did not touch him even in that moment of crisis because they had not yet been married according to the *Śāsthṛās*. She woke up the others who were sleeping in the corridor and asked them to examine him. Even ordinary people showed such adherence to *Śāsthṛās*, exercised such self control. It is because of this that our country was respected so much in the past.

It was evident to her that the man who was to marry her and provide her a good life had passed away. She wept in sorrow and the day dawned.

At that time *Jnānasambhandhar* (one of the famous *Śaiva* saints) was visiting that town. This sad news reached his ears. His heart brimmed with compassion for the young girl. He then prayed to that very Lord who had swallowed the '*hālāhala*' poison, and sang a song beseeching him to remove the poison and bring the young man back to life.

Jnānasambhandhar sang "Lord you reside in the cremation grounds. Yet you can release the life of some one who has been devoured by Yama." He appealed to the Lord like a son would appeal to his father.

The Lord showed his compassion and blessed the young man. The poison vanished from the young man's body and he got revived.

Before leaving, Sambhandar advised the young man “Son don’t make this girl wait any longer. Marry her first, finish your pilgrimage and reach Madurai as a couple.”

The young man wondered “I must listen to the *Mahān*. Yet if I go back to my place and say that I got married, they would want to know who the witness was. Where will I find a witness here who can be produced in Madurai should the need arise?”

Finally he decided that the Lord was his *Sākshi*. The moment he thought of the Lord, in his mind’s eye he not only saw the ‘*Śivalingam*’ but also the well where he had the bath, and the ‘*vanni*’ tree under which he ate the *prasād*. Some people say he also saw the kitchen from which he got the *prasād*.

What he saw in his mind came flowing out as words. So he said, “I marry you with the Lord, the ‘*vanni*’ tree, the well and the temple kitchen as my witness” and tied the *mangalsūthra* around her neck.

Lingam is itself is of the form of Agni (*Agni Swarūpa*). ‘*Vanni*’ is ‘*Vanhi*’ which again means Agni. Therefore he had two *Agni Sākshis*. They then returned to Madurai as a married couple.

His wife was upset and jealous when she saw her husband bringing home a second wife all of a sudden, claiming that she was his uncle’s daughter. Yet she kept quiet and welcomed them. Thereafter the family spent several years under a cold war kind of atmosphere. In the mean time the second wife gave birth to a child.

One day the first wife’s son thrashed the second wife’s son. The second wife who was very patient till then, reprimanded the other child. Even then she only spoke to him firmly but did not hit him. But that was good enough to make the first wife react like a volcano, ready to explode. “We don’t know who you are, or what caste you belong to. You did not marry my husband in the right way either. What right do you have to admonish my son who is the

legitimate (according to *śāstrās*, tradition and law) heir to this house?" She started thus and gave vent to all her feelings.

The second wife felt deeply insulted and virtually crumbled under the weight of that onslaught. She ran to the temple of *Mīnākshi Sundarēśwarar*. She had a bath in the Golden Lotus pond and went to the *Swāmi* sannidhi and pleaded. "Oh Lord, my husband married me with you, your sthala vruksha, your temple well and your temple kitchen as witnesses. Today there is some one doubting this and has spoken openly about it. There must be several like her who have felt like her but have not spoken up. Only you have to clear everyone's doubts. Otherwise I will give up my life in your sannidhi."

She then heard the Lord's voice which said "Bring your husband's first wife and others from the town to this place." The second wife brought all of them, as she was told.

Sundarēśwaraswāmi also known as *Sōmasundara* and *Śokkanātha* in Tamil literature then recreated all the 'Thirupurambayam marriage scenes' (like a flash back) in his sannidhi in Madurai.

In the northeast corner of Madurai the Thirupurambaya Lingam, vanni tree, the well and the temple kitchen appeared. They appeared for the duration of 'one muhurtham' (48 minutes) and disappeared.

The entire town was overwhelmed by this and praised the second wife's bakthi. The first wife too apologized. The husband who was still very angry thought of sending her away. However the second wife intervened and said "Please do not do anything like that. Her doubt was legitimate and could have occurred to any one. It is because she was forthright about it, the Lord was able to reveal the truth about my fidelity and bakthi to the whole world." The husband too saw reason. The story ended happily.

DĪPĀVALI - HOLY BATH IN GANGĀ AND KĀVĒRI

In ancient times, present day Assam was a famous region known as 'Kāmarūp' because *Parāśakthi* has her abode there in the famous *Śakthi Pītam* with the name 'Kāmā'. Like *Kāmākshi* in the South, She is *Kāmākhyā*. 'Ākhyā' means a 'name'. 'Kāmākhyā' means 'one who has the name 'Kāmā'. Another thing special about Assam is its connection with an incarnation of *Bhagawān* (*Mahāviṣṇu*). *Bhagawān* took the Boar incarnation (*Varāha avathāram*), killed *Hiraṇyakāśipu* and brought out the world which had sunk into water with the tip of his tooth. The place where the tip of *Bhagawān's* tooth touched the earth is *Kāmarūp*. Probably because of its rough terrain with hills and forest it provided the necessary grip to lift the earth!

Out of this contact between *Varāhamūrthi* and *Bhūmādēvi* (Mother Earth) a son was born. The Lord after killing a demon, blessed *Bhūmādēvi* with a child. But, somehow, that child turned out to be a demon too! We cannot understand *Bhagawān's* sports (*līlā*). That son was *Narakāśura*.

Narakāśura did severe penance seeking *Brahmā's* grace and gained immense power. He inflicted cruelty on all the worlds, subjecting people to hellish (Naraka) suffering. May be, that is the reason why he was called *Narakāśura*. His another name was *Bhowman* because he was born to *Bhūmādēvi*. *Angārakā* (Mars) is also a son of the earth. Therefore when we do 'sankalpam' (solemn resolve) at the commencement of any ritual done on Tuesdays we refer to the day as '*Bhowmavāsara*'. Scientists also say that there could be life like ours only on Mars (In Greek and Roman mythologies that reddish planet is treated as the goddess of war). But the *Bhowman* of our story was very black in colour and wherever he went he turned that place into darkness.

Bhowman went to the world of the *Dēvās* (*Dēvalōkam*) and wreaked havoc there. He took away *Indra's* umbrella and his

mother Adithi's ear rings (*kuṇḍalam*). Umbrella used to be considered the important symbol of a king. *Narakāśura* was ruling from *Kāmarūpa* with *Prākjyōthishapuram* as the capital. *Jyōthishapuram* means a well illuminated bright place. 'Prāk' means the front, the East. Because it was located in the eastern side of India he gave this name to his capital.

Indra bore the brunt of all this for several years without complaining to any one. If it was some other demon he could have complained to the Lord. But this one was the Lord's own son! So he felt that complaining about the demon might amount to pointing fingers at the Lord. So he kept tolerating.

* * *

PLEA TO KRISHNĀ:

The Lord incarnated as *Krishnā* and performed superhuman acts even as he was playing with the cowherds. Even at a very young age he destroyed several demons starting from *Pūthanā*. Indra caused rain to pour incessantly for seven days. The Lord held aloft the *Gōvardhana* Hill on his finger as an umbrella and protected the people and the cattle. Indra surrendered at his feet and performed 'Govindha Pattabhishekam' to him.

On another occasion *Brahmā* wrongly thought. 'My father, the *Paramāthmā*, is caught in *Māyā* and is roaming around herding the cows. Will he not be rid of the *Māyā* if I were to hide the herd?'. He abducted the entire lot of cows and cowherds. Within seconds *Balakrishnā* created a duplicate for every one. For one full year the duplicates lived in *Gokula* and the parents thought they were the original! Although *Krishnā* (*Vishṇu*) is the god of protection he could create too. However *Brahmā* the god of creation could not look after the abducted herd and the cowherds! He struggled trying to do something about which he knew nothing.

He was not the *Samhāramūrthi*, therefore he could not destroy them. *Krishnā* had destroyed several *asurās* right from his childhood. Brahma had neither the power nor the inclination to do that. It is then that he realized that though he was one of the three Murthis, he was not on par with the father, the *Paramāthmā*. He realized that even his power to create was a blessing from the father. *Brahmā* understood 'The *Paramāthmā* is not influenced by any *Māyā*. *Māyā* is his servant. *Māyā* had covered my eyes, as a result of which, I could not understand this.' He returned all the herds and cowherds to *Krishnā*, apologized profusely and praised him.

Indra decided that *Krishnā* is the one who could kill Narakasura not minding that he is his own son. Whatever he shows himself to be outwardly, *Krishnā* is unaffected by people or relationships and he acts according to *dharmā*. However, since he had been busy destroying various evil forces from the time he appeared on the earth, Indra wanted to wait for sometime.

Krishnā killed Kamsa, drove away *Jarāsandha*, created *Dwāarakāpūri* and stayed there for a while. He fought with Rukmiṇi's people and married her. Subsequently he married *Sathyabhāmā* and others. In between also there were a few battles. Then he led a peaceful and happy life with his wives, performing his duties according to *Gruhastha Dharmā*. Indra felt now was the right time and approached the Lord with his complaints about *Narakāsura*.

* * *

NARAKĀSURA'S DEATH; SATHYABHĀMĀ'S ROLE

Krishnā immediately climbed on the back of Garuda like *Mahāvishṇu* himself and flew towards *Prākjyōthishapuram* along with *Sathyabhāmā*. He took *Sathyabhāmā* because she is an

incarnation of *Bhūmādēvi*. *Rukmiṇi* is *Srīdēvi*. *Bhāmā* is *Bhūdēvi*. The general impression is that *Rukmiṇi* is modest and of noble qualities but *Bhāmā* is aggressive and arrogant. There are stories that the Lord played his games making it appear that he was supporting *Bhāmā* but in the last minute he snubbed her in the presence of *Rukmiṇi*. But this time he wanted the world to see *Bhāmā*'s exemplary qualities. So he took her with him. He was the 'purusha'; so it was not all that surprising that he had the courage to slay his son. What is more extraordinary is a mother thinking, "My son is the enemy of the world, so he must die". It was the Lord's intention to show to the world that *Bhāmā* was such a mother who could think of the good of the world and witness the slaying of her own son and that was why he took her with him.

From ancient times to this day there have been several instances of ladies of royal houses having fought for *dharmā*. (Even in the recent past there were ladies like Ahilyabhai, Rani of Jhansi and others). *Kaikēyi* drove the chariot for *Daśarathā* during the battle with *Sambarāsura*. *Bhāmā* was more like *Kaikēyi* and so *Krishṇā* took her with him. There is also a version which says that she took *Krishṇā* in a chariot, driving it herself.

The Lord took *avathār* as *Krishṇā* at the behest of *Bhūmādēvi*. She, the embodiment of patience, could not bear the evil acts of the wicked kings. So she took the form of a cow and prayed unto *Mahāviṣṇu*. It was not enough to destroy *Kamsa*, *Śiṣupāla*, *Jarāsandha*, *Duryōdhanā* and others. It was important to vanquish *Narakāsura* who was worse than all of them. So *Krishṇā* and *Bhāmā* went as a couple to destroy him.

Narakāsura lived in *Prākjyōthishapura* in a manner no one could ever reach him. He had built several fortresses one within the other. In the outer boundary he had built a fortress with the mountains, then a fortress with weapons, a fortress of water created with magical powers, thereafter a fortress with fire, one

with Vayu and so on. The Lord destroyed these and entered the city. He blew his conch, the *Pāñchajanya*, and challenged *Narakāsura* to come out for fight. First *Narakāsura*'s commander-in-chief called 'Murā' came to battle. He fought with valour and the Lord destroyed him with his 'chakrayudha'.

Just as Garuda is *Vishṇu*'s vehicle, *Sudarśana Chakra* is his weapon. *Krishṇā* was not only riding the Garuda in this instance, but also carrying his weapons like the *Chakrayudha*, *Kaumēdhaki* etc. Rama and other *avathārs* did not do anything similar. That is why *Krishnāvatārā* is called *Pūrnāvatārā*.

Because he vanquished *Murā*, he is called *Murāri*, *Murahari* etc. *Murā*'s Ari - is Mura's enemy. Hence he was called *Murāri*. Because *Īśwarā* was the enemy of the Asura who was of the form of three 'purās' he was known as 'Purāri'. As soon as Mura was killed his seven sons came to battle. They too met the same end like their father.

Finally *Narakāsura* came to the battle field riding an elephant. The Lord fought him from Garuda's back. Garuda and *Sathyabhāmā* helped him in destroying *Narakāsura*'s army. He could have done everything himself but he felt that they too must have a role in this battle. So he blessed them with this opportunity to serve.

The entire army of demons was destroyed. It was now a ferocious one-to-one battle between the Lord and *Narakāsura*. The fight did not stop with the day but extended to nights as well. The Asuras became stronger in the night but the Lord handled all that. *Narakasura* could not match his wits and strength.

Finally the Lord killed *Narakāsura* with his *Chakrāyudha* during dawn. When day broke the whole world woke up to a big relief.

This happened in the month of *Āśvin* on the Chaturdasi day, the next day being Amavasya (New Moon day). *Āśvina* is also called '*Āśviyujam*'. The Chaturdasi day falling in the fortnight of the waning moon (*Krishṇa* Paksha) is considered important for *Paramēśwarā*. The monthly Chaturdasi is called *Śivarāthri*. The *Śivarāthri* that comes in the month of *Māgh* is celebrated as *Mahāśivarāthri*. Lord Sri *Krishṇā* had kept awake on a *Śivarāthri* day fighting *Narakāśura* and killed him. Another version is that *Sathyabhāmā* killed him.

What is important is that both of them did it happily for the sake of the welfare of the world, considering it more important than the loss of a son.

* * *

BHŪMĀDĒVI'S PRAYERS

One version has it that *Narakāśura* prayed at the time of his death that the whole world should have an auspicious bath, and celebrate this day. *Gangā Snānam* is considered the most auspicious. He prayed that the merit/*puṇya* of having a *Gangā Snānam* should accrue to everyone no matter where he takes a bath. In another version it is said that it is *Narakā's* mother, *Bhūmādēvi* who prayed thus. There is nothing special about *Narakā* praying thus, when he was in the state of getting mukthi, having been slain by the Lord himself. It appears that a mother praying thus is more significant. She asked for this boon to make amends for the way her son had harassed the whole world and kept it in tears. She now wanted that the world should celebrate the day of his death forgetting the trials and sorrows of their day-to-day life and spend the day in enjoyment.

Sathyabhāmā who is the incarnation of *Bhūmādēvi* assisted in slaying *Narakāśura*. It is said that *Bhūmādēvi* came and returned

the umbrella, the kuṇḍalas he had taken away from the *Dēvās* and prayed to the Lord. One might wonder as to how this is possible. The *Avatārā* of God and the original God have co-existed at the same time. *Ādhi Śankara* who was the avatara of *Paramēśwarā* went to Kailasa, had *dharsan* of *Īśwarā* and obtained the Pancha Lingas from *Īśwarā*! There is another incident in *Bhāgavatham*. *Krishnā* and Arjuna went to *Vishṇu* loka to bring back the dead children of a Brahmin. They saw *Nārāyaṇā* reclining in '*Śēsha Śayana*' and prayed to him. *Vishṇu* and *Krishnā* had a conversation too! Similarly *Bhūmādēvī* and *Bhāmā* existed at the same time.

All of us have '*Gangā Snānam*' on *Dīpāvalī* day, thanks to *Bhūmādēvī*'s prayer that every one in the world should derive the *puṇya* of a *Gangā Snānam* on the day her son was slain in battle by the Lord.

It is the practice to have a bath when a relative dies. *Narakāśura* did good to the world by his death. His mother ensured that the whole world has a bath thinking of him as a relative. This has continued through generations over ages. However, this bath is not one of mourning but of joy and happiness. Normally, we have bath in cold water whether it is for mourning or as a preparation for observance of austerities (*vratha*). However, since it is a happy occasion she obtained the boon that it should be an oil bath with hot water.

There is another thing that is new in this. It is generally understood that we should not have an oil bath before sunrise. However *Bhūmādēvī* wanted that her son should be remembered differently. That is why she sought the Lord's permission that only on *Dīpāvalī* day an exception be made and people can have an oil bath before sunrise.

Aruṇōdhayam (early dawn) refers to the rising of *Aruṇā*. *Aruṇā* is *Sūrya*'s charioteer. He is reddish in colour. The colour

red is also referred to as Aruṇa. About forty eight minutes before the sun appears in the horizon, the sky starts becoming red. On *Dīpāvalī* day we must have the oil bath forty eight minutes before sunrise. However it is wrong to bathe at two or three in the night.

Bhūmādēvi prayed that Lakshmi should reside in the oil that we apply to our head and *Gangā* should reside in the hot water with which we bathe. All of us remember the *Gangā Snānam* part of it but forget Lakshmi in the oil we apply to our heads! Yet it is that little detail which connects *Dīpāvālī* to *Bhūmādēvi* and *Śrīdēvi*. In the north they perform special Lakshmi *pūjā* on *Dīpāvalī* day. Traders open new accounts on that day. Here again we see *Bhūmādēvi*'s graciousness. She did not seek any special honour for herself. Instead she has ensured that her husband's other wife Lakshmi and *Gangā* considered to be *Paramēśwarā*'s wife, are remembered on that day.

Īśwarā is also called *Gangādhara*. Therefore as soon as we mention '*Gangā*' we tend to think that it has to do something with *Śiva*. In fact '*Gangā*' also has a lot of connection with *Vishṇu*. When the *Vamana brahmachāri* became *Thrivikramā*, and measured the whole earth with his first step, and measured the the devaloka with his second step, Brahmā came running to wash his foot with water. It is that water which became *Ākāśa Gangā*. *Bhagīratha* performed severe penance to bring a stream of that Ganges to the earth, so that his ancestors may go to heaven. Because the earth may not have borne the force of the *Ākāśa Gangā*, *Īśwarā* out of his infinite compassion received it in his 'jata' (matted hair), tamed it and released it gently in a manner that earth could handle the pressure. Therefore *Gangā* has both *Vishṇu* and *Śiva* connections.

Bhūmādēvi was not happy just doing something different in memory of her son. Nor was she satisfied if all the people in the world were happy. She was keen that people were also blessed

with more *puṇya* and auspiciousness. That is why she ensured that there is the presence of Lakshmi in the oil and *Gangā* in the hot water.

* * *

GĪTĀ: DĪPĀVĀLI'S YOUNGER BROTHER

Bhūmādevī did not think about whether *Gangā* had connection with *Śiva* or *Vishṇu*. Is *Gangā* not considered the first among the holy waters to bless everyone without consideration of *Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava* differences? That is why she prayed that the bath must have the benefit of a bath in the Ganges.

In general, if you were to read the *sthalapurāṇa* of a place it would say, it is equivalent to *Kāśī* or better than *Kāśī*. That all places are compared with no other place but *Kāśī* clearly indicates that it is *Kāśī* that is the King amongst the holy places. Similarly amongst all the '*puṇya thīrthās*' everything is compared with Ganges. Therefore it is proved that it is Ganges that is superior to everything.

Our *Āchāryā* too says in *Bhaja Govindam*

“*Bhagavadgītā kinchith adhīthā Gangājāla lava kaṇikapīthā
Sakrudhapi yēna murāri samarchā kriyathē thasya yamēna na charchā*”

He says 'He who has read the *Bhagavad Gita* a little bit, who has taken a few drops of the Ganges water, has performed *archanā* for *Murāri* at least once, has nothing to fear from *Yamā*. That is, he will go direct to heaven instead of *Yamalōka* or hell (*Naraka*). The *Āchāryā* says that the Lord of death has no jurisdiction over one who has taken at least a few drops of Ganges water.

There is an interesting thing about this *śloka*. *Gītā*, *Gangā*, *Murāri*, and *Yamā* - all four have a connection with *Dīpāvalī* too.

I have been referring to the *Gītā* as *Dīpāvali*'s younger brother. *Dīpāvali* holds the most exalted position amongst festivals because a mother asked for such a boon under the most unexpected circumstances - she was mourning the loss of her own son, yet she prayed that the whole world celebrate that day and be blessed for it. It is because of her that all of us are able to celebrate *Dīpāvali*. Similarly, every one starting from the ancient *āchāryās* of the various sects to the modern day Tilak, Gandhi, Sadhus, philosophers and political leaders glorify the *Gītā* as holding a place of honour above all other religious texts, philosophies and *śāstrās*. The *Gītā* too was born out of the power of sacrifice which appeared in the most unexpected circumstances. Normally such philosophical discussions are held in an *āśrama* between an old guru and a young sishya in a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere. But the *Bhagavad Gītā* was born in the battlefield. This was the advice received by Arjuna, from *Krishnā* who was of the same age. Arjuna was the 'yajamāna' and *Krishnā* was the charioteer. In the most dangerous moment when his very life was under threat, Arjuna was more keen to know the ultimate truth. He approaches *Krishnā* with an attitude of sacrifice and pleads and prostrates before him 'I have surrendered unto you as your disciple; give me your command in the form of sage advice.'

Śishyastheham chāthi mām thvām prapannam

It is then that the Gita was born. That is why just as the *Dīpāvali* is most exalted amongst festivals, the *Gītā* occupies the most revered place amongst religious texts. To top it all, it is Sri *Krishnā* who has given us both.

Āchāryā then mentions about praying to *Murāri* with archanā, as the third thing. There are ever so many names of the Lord. Yet he says '*Murāri samarcha*'. We noted that the Lord became *Murāri* only when he killed *Murā* who was *Narakāsura*'s friend.

Finally the *Āchāryā* talks about Yama. The moment we say 'Narakā' we are reminded of 'Naraka Lōka' and *Yamadharma*rājā. Not only that. It is prescribed that we must perform 'Tharpaṇā' for Yamā on *Dīpāvali* day. In the north people light lamps called 'Yama *Dīpā*' on one day prior to the *Dīpāvali* day.

* * *

WHY 'GANGĀ SNĀNAM'?

Thus it seems our *Āchāryā* composed this verse keeping *Dīpāvali* in mind. Let me now address the question why 'Gangā Snānam' on *Dīpāvali* day.

Bhūmādēvi wished that the day her son was slain, must be celebrated as festival for all times to come. She ensured that people had an auspicious bath, wore new clothes, ate a variety of things - all in celebration. In order that her son would be remembered, she got a boon from the Lord that people should have an oil bath before Arunodhayam (early dawn). Although the Lord himself had granted such a boon, she thought what else she could do to allay the fears of those who might think that it was against *sāsthrās* to have an oil bath before sunrise. She thought that if she ensured that Ganges resided in the hot water and Lakshmi resided in the oil used for the oil bath on that day no one will have fear and no one will refuse Ganges and Lakshmi. Thus all the people would not only be happy but also earn a lot of *puṇya*. That is why the bath on *Dīpāvali* day came to be known as 'Gangā Snānam'.

For those who have had the *Gangā Snānam*, there is no fear from hell (naraka) or untimely death. In addition she prayed that all of us be rid of all illnesses. She is not only a mother for *Narakā* but for all of us. In English she is referred to as Mother Earth. The cow, earth & the *Vēdhas* are referred to as mothers - as Gomatha, *Bhūmātha* and *Vēdhamāthā*.

Because she had given birth to *Narakā* and was fond of him she prayed that the day be known as 'Naraka Chaturdasi'. However these days we find only the almanacs mention this name. Otherwise all of us refer to *Dīpāvali*. *Dīpāvali* means a row of lights. It is in the north that people celebrate it as *Dīpāvali* by lighting lamps. We in the south, light lamps on the day of 'Kāarthikai Dīpam' in the *Kāarthik* month.

* * *

A BLEMISH EVEN FOR THE LORD (DHŌSHAM)

The very same Lord *Krishnā* who granted a boon that all the people in the world be rid of their blemish with a *Gangā Snānam* and that they could celebrate a festival with all happiness, himself suffered a blemish - a *dhōsham*! The *Śāstrās* have 'vidhi-nishēdhās' prescribed in them. A 'vidhi' directs - 'Do this'. A 'nishēdhā' directs 'Do not do this.' The Lord had to accept the consequences of his action and act according to the *Śāstrās* although he was God himself. Only then 'conduct according to *dharmā*' (*Dharma-anushtāna*) will be sustained. He took on himself the *dhōsham* (blemish) called *Vīra Hatthi*. One gets a 'Vīra Hatthi *Dhōsha*' when he kills a great warrior. Although *Narakasura* was evil personified he was also a brave warrior. Therefore the Lord subjected himself to *Vīra Hatthi Dhōsha*.

Because of the *Vīra Hatthi dhōsham*, the Lord's glorious 'swarūpam' (appearance) like a blue jewel, became dull and lost lustre. When we see some one who has become dark and thin we say 'Looks like a *Brahmahatthi*'. 'Brahmahatthi' is the *dhōsham* one suffers when he has killed a Brahmin. Because of such killing one's physical aura and *thējas* disappear.

When Sri Ramachandramurthi killed *Rāvaṇa* he became subject of not only to *Vīra Hatthi* but also *Brahmahatthi* and

Chhāyā Hatthi as well. *Rāvaṇa* was a Brahmin. He was the son of a rishi called Visravas. He was well versed in the *Vēdhas*. When he was caught under *Kailāsa* he pleased the Lord by singing the Sama *Vēdha* playing the *Vīṇā*. Therefore Rama was afflicted with Brahmahatthi *Dhōsha*. '*Chhāyā*' means brightness, light. Figuratively *Chhāyā* refers to one's reputation, fame etc. Even in English we see terms such as lustre-illustrious, glow-glory, etc referring to qualities that lead to fame. *Rāvaṇa* had several illustrious qualities such as majestic appearance, mastery of *Vēdha* *Śāstrās*, knowledge of music and *Śiva bhakthi* - all *Chhāyās*. Thus Rama was afflicted with *Chhāyā* *dhōsha* when he killed *Rāvaṇa*. Rama installed *Śivalingams* - one in Ramēswaram to get rid of Brahmahatthi *dhōsha*, one in Vēdāraṇyam (Tamil Nadu) to get rid of *Vīra* *Hathi* and one in *Pattīswaram* near *Kumbakonam* to get rid of *Chhāyā* *Hatthi*. People know only about *Ramēswaram* now. But even in the other two temples we have 'Ramalingam'.

* * *

PRĀYASCHITTHA PRESCRIBED BY ĪŚVARĀ

As he did in his earlier avatara (installing *Śiva* *Lingam*) Sri *Krishṇā* thought he would ask *Paramēśwarā* for his advice on how to get rid of *Vīra* *Hatthi*.

A few amongst us, *Śaivas* and *Vaishṇavas*, think of *Śiva* and *Vishṇu* as being separate and get into debates as to who is greater and so on. The two of them however know that 'In essence we are both the same. For the welfare of the world and as a sport we have donned our roles as protector and destroyer.' Therefore both will fall at each other's feet. They might even fight sometimes. Sometimes one will lose; at another time the other will lose. They will become so close in affection that they will become one as two halves of the same body.

Now Sri *Krishnā* approached *Īśwarā* in *Kailāsa* 'Tell me a way to get rid of *Vīra Hatthi dhōsham*'.

Prāyaschiththān yaśēśhāñi thapah karmāthmākāni vai
Yāni thēshām aśēshānām krishṇānusmaraṇām param

It is said 'There are several forms of penance, *karmās* (rituals) to be performed as *Prāyaschiththās*. The one towering above all as '*Saravaprāyaschittā*' is thinking of *Krishnā* - '*Krishṇa smaraṇām*'.

Such a '*Pathītha Pāvana*' (one who purifies the sinner) asks *Īśwarā* for advice saying that he has got a *dhōsham*. *Īśwarā* too understood that *Krishnā* was enacting all this to provide a lesson to the world. Therefore he began to think of an appropriate remedy. 'He will not accept it if I said that you are one without *dhōshās* - '*Dhōsharahitan*'. Of course a bath in the *Gangā* was obvious as a remedy, but one would wonder whether that was adequate when such a major *dhōshā* has occurred.' Our family doctor might be a well-reputed General Physician. Yet he himself would send us to specialists in case of major illnesses pertaining to heart lungs etc. If we take the instance of the gods, whether it is *Śiva*, or *Ambāl* or *Vishṇu*, each one of them is Parabrahma *Swarūpam*, therefore each one is capable of giving all the blessings. Yet we have to pray to *Gaṇēśa*, if we want obstacles removed. We have to pray to *Saraswathi* for education and knowledge. We have to perform *Sūryanamaskara* for good health. Therefore 'Prescribing just *Gangā Snānam* for *Krishnā* would not be appropriate. We have to prescribe something special for him. That *Gangā Snānam* destroys all sins is known to everyone. Advising *Krishnā* to do it would be insulting his intelligence. He might think that he is afflicted by a *dhosham* that even *Ganges* cannot remove. Therefore he would expect a more potent *prayaschiththa*'.

Thus thinking *Īśwarā* said 'This is the month of *Thulā*. Right through this month for about 2 hours and 24 minutes from sunrise

sixty four thousand *puṇya thīrthas* (holy waters) reside in *Kāvēri*. If you have a bath in *Kāvēri* all your *dhōshās* will vanish.'

* * *

KĀVĒRI-THULĀ GHĀT

The entire river *Kāvēri* is sanctified during the month of *Thulā* because of the presence of all the *thīrthās*. However it might seem too general, and one might look for something more special and specific. Therefore '*Thulāsnānam*' is considered special at *Māyavaram* (*Mayilāduthurai*). *Māyūram* is the correct name. It means a peacock. Just as *Kalpagāmbālī* became a peacock and prayed to *Paramēśwarā* in *Mylāpore* in *Chennai*, she became *Abhayāmbālī* and prayed as a peacock to *Īśwarā* in *Māyavaram*. That is why it is called as *Gowri Māyūram*. There is a '*Thulā Ghāt*' in the *Kāvēri* river that flows there. People come here to have a bath throughout the month of *Thulā*. *Īśwarā* advised *Krishṇā* to have a bath in that '*Thulā Ghāt*'. Not only that, he personally accompanied *Krishṇā*.

Krishṇā- the '*Yamuṇa Thīra Vihārī*' blessed us and made sure that all of us got a *Gangā Snānam* on *Dīpāvalī* day while he himself went to *Kāvēri* and had *Thulā Snānam*.

His *Vīra Hatthi dhōsham* vanished immediately. As a visible proof of this he regained his aura and began shining again like a blue jewel.

All the gods witnessed this unique sight, had the *dharsan* of *Īśwarā* and *Vishṇu* at the same time, and also had '*Thulāsnānam*'.

In the *Kāvēri Purāṇam* it is stated that *Bhūmādēvi* asked for all the boons pertaining to her son *Narakasura* at this juncture.

* * *

KĀVĒRI SNĀNAM ON DĪPĀVALI DAY:

Therefore *Dīpāvali* has a connection not only with *Gangā* but also with *Kāvēri*. Only on that day *Gangā* resides in all hot waters for the period of one muhūrtha (48 minutes) starting from early dawn to sunrise (Arunōdhayam to Sūryōdhayam). In the month of Thulā all the holy waters including *Gangā* are present in Kaveri for 2 hours and 24 minutes from sunrise.

Therefore on *Dīpāvali* day we must have oil bath with hot water during Arunōdhayam thinking of *Gangā*. Thereafter we must have a bath in cold water well after sunrise, thinking of 'Thulā *Kāvēri*' (but within 2 hours and 24 minutes after sunrise). In the first bath we think of *Narakāsura*, *Bhūmādēvi*, *Sathyabhāmā* and *Krishnā*. In the second bath we think of *Paramēswarā* too.

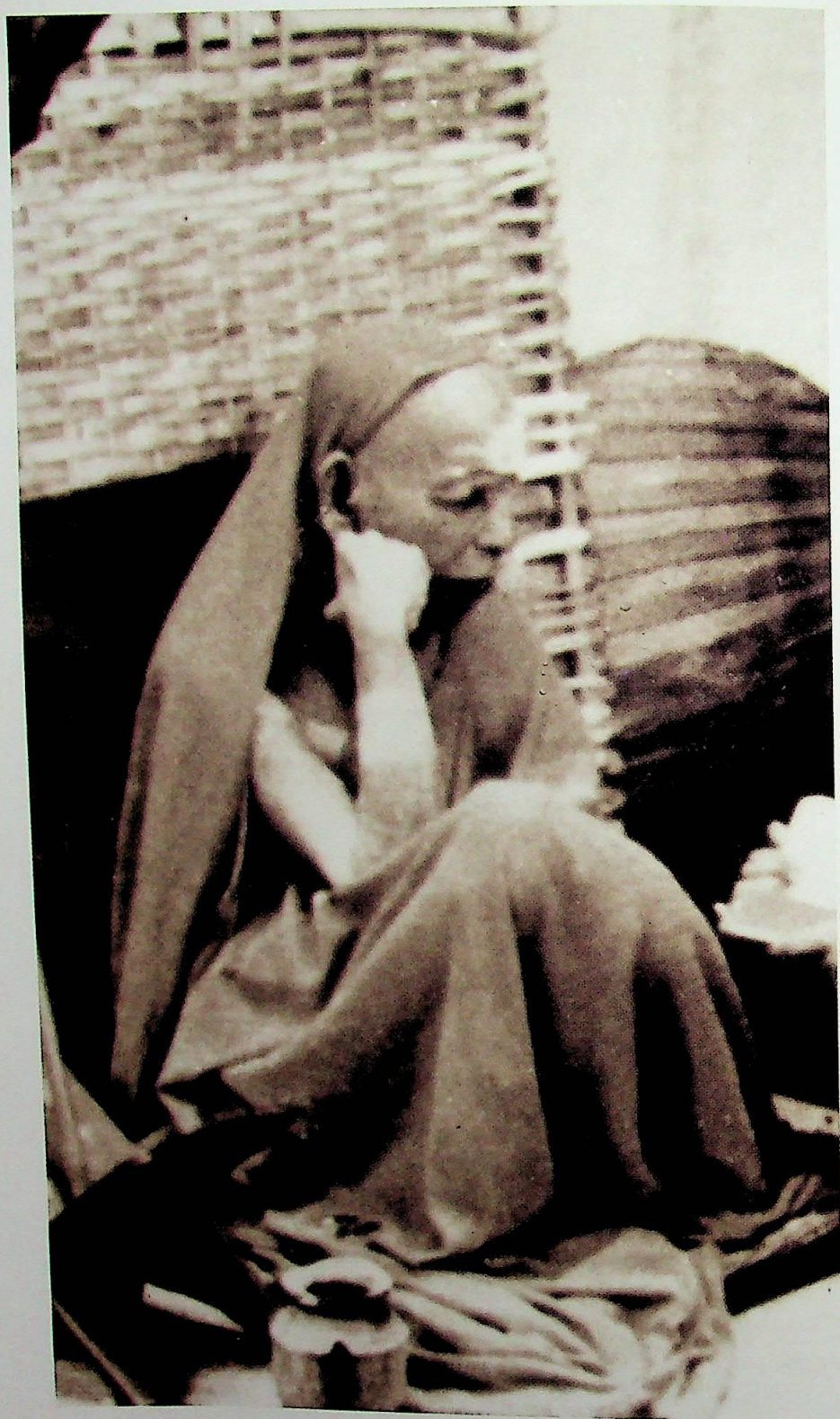
This auspicious thought is the greatest holy bath. This is what removes all impurities inside and cleanses the *Jīvā*. It is said 'Govindēthi, *sadhā snānam*'. This does not mean that bathing in *Gangā*, *Kāvēri* etc are not necessary. It is that very Gōvindā who has given the *Gangā Snānam* with so much compassion and he himself is having bath in *Kāvēri*, having bath thinking of him is not only a holy bath for the soul but also like new clothes and sweets.

* * *



SADHĀŚIVAM





ĀDHI GURU

*Sadhāśiva Samārambhām Śankarāchāryā Madhyamām
Asmadh āchārya paryanthām vandhē Guruparamparām*

This is a *ślōka* by which obeisance is paid to the line of Gurus who have been there from ancient times and up till now. This has to be recited at least twice a day by all those who follow the tenets of *Śankara Bhagavadhpādha*. If they have not been reciting it till now they should start reciting it. When it is said 'up till now' it does not mean the guru who is there now in the present century. Since the line of gurus will continue without a break there will be future *śishyas* and they will have to recite it with reference to the gurus whom they will be seeing at that time. In the original *ślōka* (as given above) there is nothing to indicate 'till today'. It only says 'Asmadh āchārya' which means 'an āchāryā'. It should be understood to mean the āchāryā who is there at any given time and gives upadesam.

The beginning, the middle and the end is what is usually said. But there is no end to the line of the guru tradition. It is eternal. Therefore it is to be taken as the beginning, middle, present and the time of every generation in the future.

The *ślōka* says that *Ādhi* Guru is *Sadhāśiva*. When we say āchāryā one who comes to mind is *Śankara Bhagavadhpādha* who is the ruling monarch at the center as it were. He was the incarnation of *Sadhāśiva*, the *Ādhi* Guru.

Usually it is said that the *Ādhi* Guru for all of us - the *Smārthas*, *Adhvaitis* - is *Dakṣiṇāmūrthi*. We have heard it said that it was he who remained motionless, actionless and speechless, out of compassion for the world, took *avathār* as *Āchāryā* in order to tour the country widely, preach, establish mutts and ensure the survival and growth of *Sanāthana Dharmā*. But here in the *ślōka*

the name of *Dakshinamurthi* is not mentioned. The *śloka* starts with 'beginning beautifully with *Sadhāsiva*'. This is because *Dakshināmūrthi* is *Śiva* and *Śiva* has several forms, just as we talk of *Narasimhamūrthi*, *Rāmachandramūrthi*, *Krishnā*, *Hayagrīva* and others who are different forms of *Mahāvishṇu*. In the same manner *Dakshināmūrthi*, *Natarājā*, *Bikshātanar*, *Bairavar* are all forms of *Śiva*.

* * *

THE EIGHT NAMES (ASHTANĀMĀ): MAHĀDĒVA

Just as we talk of *Vishṇu* as *Mahāvishṇu* we do not refer to *Śiva* as *Mahāsiva*. When we say '*Mahāsivarāthri*' the term '*mahā*' is the adjective for the entire word that follows it and not just for *Śiva*. The night of Chaturdasi during every fortnight of the waning moon is called '*Śivarāthri*'. It is the *Śivarāthri* of the month. Of these which are twelve in the year that which falls in the month of '*Māgh*' is *Mahāsivarāthri*.

But because of this it should not be thought that *Śiva* is not qualified to have the title '*Mahā*'. Although he is not called *Mahāsiva* he has the name '*Mahān*'.

There are eight names of *Śiva* which are special. Of these the eighth is '*Mahān*'. *Bhāvan*, *Sarvan*, *Īśānan*, *Paśupathi*, *Rudran*, '*ugram*', *Bhīman* and *Mahān*. At the end of *Sahasranāmam*, *Thrisathi*, *Ashtōthra* (*Śatha*) archana etc these eight names are recited as '*Bhavāya Dēvāya Namah*, *Sarvāya Dēvāya Namah*, *Īśānāya Dēvāya Namah*, *Paśupathayē Dēvāya Namah*, *Rudrāya Dēvāya Namah*, *ugrāya Dēvāya Namah*, *Bhīmāyā Dēvāya Namah*, *Mahadhē Dēvāya Namah*' in this order and then only *dīpa*, *dūpa* and *neivedyam* are done. When we say '*Namaskāram* to *Mahān*' *Mahān* changes to *Mahadhē*. It is because of this specialty *Śiva* has the well-known name '*Mahādēva*'.

What is special about these eight names is that if archana' is to be done in a simple manner to *Ambāl* it is enough if each of these names is recited and said 'Namaskāram to the consort' - *Bhavyasya Dēvasya Pathnyai namah, Sarvasya Dēvasya Pathnyai namah* etc and finally *Mahathō Dēvasya Pathnyai namah*. In the same manner 'archana' can be done to the sons - *Vignēswara* and *Subrahmaṇya* too : *Bhavyasya Dēvasya Puthrāya namah* etc and ending with *Mahathō Dēvasya Puthrāya namah*. Instead of *Puthrāya* the term *Sūnavē* is also used. '*Sūnu*' also means 'puthra'. There are the consorts of *Subrahmaṇya* - *Valli* and *Dēvāsena* and the consorts of *Vignēswara* - *Siddhi* and *Buddhi*. There is also *Vallabhai*. If one wants to do 'archana' to them also it is not necessary to dig into countless *Purāṇās* to find out the appropriate 'ashtōthram' for each of them. The eight names of *Śiva* come to our aid in this also.

* * *

MAHĀLINGAM - MAHĒSWARAN

Just as we call *Śiva* as *Mahādēva* we also call him *Mahālingam* and *Mahēswaran*. Yet *Śiva* is not *Mahāśiva* just as *Vishṇu* is *Mahāvishṇu*. Why is this so?

Since he is the greatest of the *Dēvās* he is *Mahādēva*. Since he has the form of *Lingam* which has greatness and glory he is *Mahālingam*. *Lingam* means a mark, a symbol. All the forms of *Dēvathās* are the symbols of the *Parabrahmam*. Among them the first place is for the *Mūrthi* which is *Lingam*.

I used the word '*Mūrthi*'. But the *Sivalingam* which we see does not have eyes, ears, body etc. Viewed from this point it is actually '*amūrthi*', '*arūpa*'. Yet is it empty space? It is not so. It is a form which denotes the universe, the cosmos which is oval shaped. Those who are knowledgeable would say that it combines

'*Saguṇa-Nirguṇa*' '*Sakaḷam-Nishkaḷam*'. In such a form which is a combination of the form and the formless Adhvaitha - Dwaitha principles become inclusive. That is it has within it all the principles and all that transcends principles. That is why it is called *Mahālingam* - a sign which is great, glorious.

The term *Īśwarā* means the one who is powerful and the chief who rules. The root 'Īś' means 'to rule, to be the owner'. Since he does the great job of having the entire universe as his own property and rules over it he is called Maheswara.

* * *

THE FIVE FUNCTIONS

All are aware of three functions, namely, Srushti (creation), Sthithi (protection) and *Samhāram* (destruction). The fourth function is drawing a screen over the Brahman through *māyā* and giving room for the three functions said first - it is Thirōdhanā. That is hiding one's own true form, the '*Āthma swarūpam*' - creating the world of sentient and non-sentient beings. Just as the functionaries for srushti, sthithi and *samhāram* are *Brahmā*, *Vishṇu* and Rudra respectively, in the *Śaiva* and *Śāktha Āgamas* it is *Īśwarā* who does Thirōdhanam. Since the entire universe is bound by *Māyā* which is called '*Maha māyā*' the title '*Mahā*' is given to *Īśwarā* and is called *Mahēśwara*.

Out of the five functions *Brahmā* and *Vishṇu* who are not connected with *Śiva* have two functions. The remaining three are with the three names born of *Śiva* - *Samhāram* is with Rudra and Thirōdhanam is with *Īśwarā*. The one function that remains, the fifth, is the highest. That is called '*Anugraham*' (bestowing grace).

Anugraham is of two kinds. One is the grace bestowed when the *jīvā* is tied down to the world of delusion (*Māyā*) - that is a body with all the organs for conducting the life and the world where it is

conducted and enjoyed. These forms are called 'Thanu', 'Karaṇa', 'Bhuvana', 'Bhōgam' respectively. If it is asked, 'Is it Anugraham to give the form which is meant for the life in the world of delusions?' the answer would be : 'Somehow the *jīvā* has incurred *karmā*. The *karmā* has to be discharged. How to do it? It can only be done by way of performing good deeds in this world. Even for getting released from the world of delusion and to do *sādhana*, there should be the body, the organs, the world, the pleasures etc. Understand that *Paramāthmā* has given these forms to enable you to discharge the *karmā* of the previous births in the present life. If you understand it and make use of these for the destruction of the *karmā* you will know that the forms are also anugraham'.

In whatever way it is said it is only the anugraham of the lower level. Most of us instead of taking Thanu, Karaṇa, Bhuvana and Bhōgam as anugraham and making use of them to get released from *samsāra*, go on adding to the *karmās* and get sunk in them. Therefore it is difficult to certify this as anugraham.

But there is the other anugraham which is of the highest state, that is releasing the *jīvā* from *samsāra* and giving him *mōksham*. There is no anugraham higher than that. *Paramāthmā*'s love and compassion touch the highest point only in pulling us out of the slush in which we are sunk and blessing us with the state which is deathless and eternal. It is that form of *Śiva* which grants that highest form of grace which is called *Sadhāśiva*.

* * *

ONLY ŚIVA HAS THE ADJECTIVE 'SADHĀ'

There is no *Mahāśiva* like *Mahāviṣṇu*. It is only *Sadhāśiva*. There is no need to feel aggrieved that *Śiva* has no name as *Mahā Śiva* because the name *Sadhāśiva* is very special and unique. *Sadhā* has a uniqueness which *Maha* does not have.

The adjective Mahā is used not only for *Vishṇu* but for several other gods too. The World Mother Lakshmi is called *Mahālakshmi*. *Ambāl* who is Durga and Chandigai also has the *Mahālakshmi* form. She has also the form of *Mahākālī*, *Mahāsaraswathi* and other 'dēvis'. There is also *Mahā Gaṇapthi*. *Subrahmaṇya* also has the name *Mahasēnan*. But the adjective *Sadhā* is unique for *Śiva* only and for no other *Swāmi* such as *Vishṇu* or *Rāmā*. *Rāmā* combines with several names and becomes *Śivarāman*, *Vēdharāman*, *Kēvalrām*, *Shānthāram* etc etc but there is no name as *Sadhārāman*.

* * *

SADHĀŚIVA IN RIG VĒDHA

I shall now tell something of which all of us who are the followers of *Āchāryā* can be proud. The Sanskrit word 'sam' has more or less the same meaning as '*Śivam*'. '*Śam*' is what does good. Since our *Āchāryā* did good to the whole world he is called '*Śam-karar*', *Śankara*. His natural name also became the name connected to his functions. In the first '*Rudra Sūktham*' Rudra has been called *Sadhāśiva*. The manthra says 'May He do good to all of us, men, women, animals etc'. To convey 'May He do good' the words used are 'May He become *Śankara* for us'. Normally the formation of the words to convey this meaning would be '*Nah + Śam + Kara*' and the *Śankara sabdha* would be obvious. But since it is usual for the *Vēdhās* to convey something in a hidden manner the order has been changed to 'Sam, Nah, Kara' : 'May good be done by him for us'. *Śam* and *Kara* have been separated by *Nah*. But somehow we get the *Śankara sabdham*. In the very first suktham which '*Vēdha Māthā*' dedicates to *Paramēśwarā*, she discloses that he is *Sankarāchāryā*. The term 'prachēthas' (highly knowledgeable and intelligent) used in the very beginning also becomes appropriate to the *Sarvajna*. The next description that he is highly

compassionate is also appropriate to *Āchāryā* whom we describe as '*Karuṇālayam*'. The third characteristic mentioned that he is endowed with great strength also applies to *Āchāryā* who, within a span of thirty two years, toured the country thrice, did so much upadesam, wrote so many books, engaged in countless debates etc.

From time immemorial Rudra has been worshipped as a '*sowmyamūrthi*' who does good. It is not as if he was originally '*ugra*' and then added to himself the '*sowmya*' aspect.

* * *

HE IS WHAT IS GOOD AND THE BAD TOO

Our religion has the great principle that it is the same *Paramāthmā* which is both good and bad. In reality it is neither good nor bad. *Paramāthmā* is the highest truth which cannot be defined and which has no name or form. It is that one thing which is seen as the good and the bad sentient and insentient beings due to *māyā*. This is what our religion says. We do not say that there is a god to do good and there is a satan to do bad. 'We do not say' means that our ancients who had had the experience of God did not find that there is *Īswara sakthi* only for good and some other *sakthi* for what is bad. It is only the state of peace (*sāntham*) which is the basic thing - the true thing, Brahman or *Paramāthmā*. They had found that it is that which, as the same *Īswarā*, does both good and bad. They have also taught us the way to transcend good and bad and become united with Brahman.

It is because of the concept that both good and bad flow from one *Īswarā* they had worshipped Rudra as a '*ugra*' *Mūrthi* and also as '*sowmya*' *Mūrthi*. It is one *Īswarā* who has both the forms. It is somewhat like a great warrior who fights and kills people in the battle ground with great '*ugra*' behaves with love towards wife, children and relatives at home.

‘RACE THEORY’ IS WRONG

Those religionists who are used to the concept of God and Satan misinterpreted Rudra of the *Vēdhic* religion. As they are experts in the policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ and would introduce it wherever possible they introduced the race theory in the case of Rudra also.

There is only one *Īśwarā* who is all powerful. If he is not so he is unfit to have the name of *Īśwarā*. If we say ‘Sarva’ (all) will not bad be included in it as much as good? In the well-known ‘Rudra sukthas’ that is how it has been described. It is not that *Īśwarā* is only for good and there is some other power for what is bad. There is only one *Rudra-Śiva*. There are no two races. It is only one community of *Vēdhic* values, one *Bhārath* culture.

It may be thought that I am highly conservative, committed to old values and therefore saying something contrary to the views of expert historians. There was Vivekananda. More recently there was Aurobindo. They were not like me but were all well versed in history. They all supported reformist activities and revolutionary ideas in many areas. They had also condemned those with extremely conservative views. But they too did not accept the Aryan-Dravidian theory of two races. Since many among you may feel that there is no use if there is no scientific outlook and the attitude of research and may discard the Sanathanis like me I have mentioned the names of two persons who were highly qualified in the areas of research and intellectual pursuit.

* * *

ONE WHO IS ALWAYS “UGRA” AND ALWAYS “SOWMYA”

Just as there are no two races, *Īśwarā* who protects this land from *Himālayās*, *Amarnāth* and *Kēdārñāth* to *Rāmēśwaram* is only

one. Just as it is wrong to say - as some Indologists do - the two races got amalgamated with the passage of time it is wrong to say that two types of 'Swāmis' became one.

In (*Yajur Vēdha*) Rudram in two places Rudra of 'ugra' *bhāva* is addressed like this : 'Hey! Rudra! The 'sowmya' form of yours' - 'the *Śivathanuh*'. From this it is clear beyond doubt that it is Rudra only who has the 'sowmya' (auspicious) form.

It is not that he will be 'ugra' at one time and 'sowmya' at another time alternately. He who is like nothing will always be 'ugra' Rudra and 'sowmya' *Śiva*. He who is beyond our understanding and logic can be like that. It is because he is always *Śiva* he has the name *Sadhāśiva*.

I have said earlier that a great warrior is 'ugra' (severe) on the battlefield but soft and loving at home. But for the Lord the universe is both the home and the battlefield! On one side he is the chief of destruction and on the other he is the chief of protection! Both these activities take place together. At one and the same time there is earthquake or the eruption of a volcano and at another place there is protection by way of helpful rain. Simultaneously two countries are at war with each other and some other countries enter into treaties of friendship and have peaceful relationship. We are crores and crores. But he is the one who is the 'Antharyāmi' in all of us. Some of us think good and engage ourselves in good activities. Some others think bad and engage themselves in bad activities. When these two different types of activities happen at the same time, does it not mean that the one who is the *Antharyāmi* everywhere is 'ugra' and 'sowmya' at the same time?

As already mentioned when he is the 'true himself' he is neither good nor bad and he is in a state which transcends these. When he is as *Īswarā* to reflect himself as all of us with *māyā*, he is the source of both good and bad at the sametime. When he

becomes us, the individual *jīvās*, he is good at sometime and bad at some other time.

* * *

RUDRA TOO IS ŚIVA INSIDE

Of these aspects we worship as *Sadhāśiva* one who is always Śiva, auspicious. It may be asked 'why not we worship the one who is always 'ugra' as '*Sadhārudra*'? The reason is : What we want from him is only the "*sowmya*' *bhāva*". That only will enter into us and help in our becoming the personification of love like he himself is. It is only with love we can be happy and happiness is what we want. Therefore we should worship him in his form of love, as *Sadhāśiva*.

Fire exhibits its severity by burning and reducing everything to ashes. But it is also useful for cooking, gives us light to read etc.

If we go a step higher there is another interpretation for the name *Sadhāśiva*. That is an interpretation which shows that *Sadhāśivam* is the correct way of calling him and not *Sadhāśivan*. That is even what is bad, severe (Roudram) is also basically good, born out of *Śivam*.

Whatever gives us suffering and difficulties we call bad. But unless we go through suffering how can we discharge our *karmā*? If the wrongs and sins we had committed in past life have to go and if we are to get released from the bondage of *karmā* we will have to undergo sufferings as punishment. So if the Lord, as Rudra, causes something bad to happen to us it is only for releasing us from the bondage of *karmā*. It is with that objective born of love that Śiva who is of the form of love becomes Rudra. Even when he is Rudra the basic 'bhāva' is only love which is *Śivam*. Within him is always Śiva. Therefore he is *Sadhāśiva*. Even when he is the Rudra of the

cremation ground, within him he is *Śiva*. So how can he be *Sadhārudra*?

Extending it a little further we can say that if difficulties and sufferings are not there we will never become tired of life. If the life in the world is all pleasant how will we ever think of getting released from it? We will be indulging in the little pleasures of the senses and spend our life without any thought of attaining the highest bliss which is '*Āthmānanda*'. It is because there is suffering we develop some '*vairāgya*' and desire for *mōksha*.

Even if it is not for getting released from *samsāra*, only if there is suffering we will think of the Lord for getting relieved of the suffering and be happy. Kunthi too asked the boon from *Krishnā Paramāthmā* thus : 'Let mishaps keep affecting us. Then only we will call you to protect us. You too will come. After having your *dharsan* we will develop the good sense to pray to you not for getting relief from sufferings but to get released from *samsāra*'.

So even when he is Rudra he is only *Śiva* in substance. It is to understand this great truth and not forget it he has been given the *Sadhāśiva nāmā*.

* * *

SADHĀŚIVŌM - WHAT THE VĒDHĀ DECLARES

The name *Sadhāśiva* has greatness because it is given in the *Vēdhās*. Greater than that is that Vedhas have added the *Pratīva* to it and given it as the '*Brahma Swarūpam*' which is basic to everything.

Vēdhās first tell Rudra 'You have a form which is that of *Śiva*'. It then thought that this would lead to the thinking that there are two separate forms - Rudra and *Śiva* - all the time and therefore by way of an amendment it gives a manthra which says he is *Sadhā-Śiva*.

Śiva has five faces. Four faces look to the four sides and the fifth one looks upwards to the sky. *Sathyōjātham* is what looks West. *Vāmadēvam* looks to the North. *Agōram* looks South and *Thathpurusham* to the East. The *ūrdhva* face which looks up is called '*Īśānan*'. There are Vēdha manthras for all the five faces in *Nārāyaṇavalli*. *

(* *Nārāyaṇavalli* which is a part of *Thaithiriya Upanishad* is also called *Maha Narāyaṇa Upanishad*).

It is the manthra for the *Īśāna* face that speaks of *Sadhāśiva*, adding *Praṇava* to it. The manthra says 'He is the *Īśwarā* for all vidhyā. He is the chief of the *Vēdhās* called *Brahmā*. He is the chief of *Brahmā* who creates the world by repeating the four *Vēdhās* with the four faces. May He the Parabrahmam be the *Śiva* who does good to me' and then says the *Sadhāśiva* nāma with *Praṇava* and ends with '*Sadhāśivōm*'.

Praṇava has become abbreviated as its ending sound 'm' and combined with *Sadhāśiva* making it *Sadhāśivam*. Here *Īśwarā* who is the *Thirōdhana Mūrthi* (who causes the veiling) is mentioned first, then *Sadhāśiva* who is the *Anugraha Mūrthi* and who gives moksham is mentioned and last it shows that he is also the *Praṇava* which is '*Mōksha Swarūpam*'. It is the *Śiva* referred to as '*Sāntham Adhvaitham*' in *Mandukya Upanishad*. That Upanishad itself is an expansion of *Praṇava*.

* * *

ŚIVA AND ŚIVAM

Śivan performs the function of 'anugraha' (bestowing grace). *Śivam* - a state of Parabrahmam in which all activities cease. *Anugraha Mūrthi* is *Sadhāśivan*. The formless Brahman is *Sadhāśivam*.

It is that formless *Sadhāśivam* who sports in *Māyā* as the five *Mūrthis* (who perform the five functions - panchakruthya) ending with the Anugraha Murthi - *Sadhāśivan*.

‘*Sadhā*’ can be said to be related to ‘sath’. ‘Sath’ is that which never changes and never perishes - what we refer to as sathyam.

The ‘sathya vasthu’ which is in a state of peace (*sāntham*) is *Sadhāśivam*. That *sāntham* gets activated in *Māyā* and Srushti, Sthithi - Samhāram - Tirōdhana - Anugraha take place. Before srushti and after samharam the ‘*Sānthā Śivam*’ continues to be always there. That is the base of ‘*Māyā srushti*’. It is the unchanging base of the ‘*Māyā srushti*’ which keeps on changing and perishes; the base that does not perish. It is like the earth being the base of the tree. The seed sprouts from the earth, grows into a tree and then perishes. The earth which supported the seed and gave it life undergoes no change. Even the tree when it perishes becomes the earth. In the same manner *Sadhāśivam* is the base for the universe where there is the play of *Māyā* and *Mahēswara* who conducts the *Māyā*. Not only that; *Sadhāśivam* is also the base for *Sadhāśivan* who is the *Mūrthi* who grants anugraham.

The universe of illusion (*Māyā Prapancham*) survives for crores and crores of years - there are calculations regarding this period - and becomes united with Brahman. That period of crores and crores of years is referred to as *Sadhā* in a formal way and the *Īśwarā* is called *Sadhāśivan*. But the real ‘*Sadhā*’ is the Brahman which is beyond *Māyā*. That is *Sadhāśivam*.

So long as the illusory universe survives it is *Sadhāśivan* who always conducts it and also transports beyond it and then when *Māyā* and the universe get destroyed. ‘*Sānthā Adhvaitham*’ which remains as *Ēka Āthmā* is ‘*Sadhāśivam*’.

Names which end in 'M' (the 25th consonant of Sanskrit alphabet):

In the northern parts people have the name '*Sadhāśiv*'. It can be understood both as '*Sadhāśivan*' and '*Sadhāśivam*'. But in Tamil Nadu it is not so. Not many have the name *Sadhāśivan*. *Sadhāśivam* is more prevalent. Here in Tamil Nadu people have several names ending with 'n' like *Rāman*, *Krishṇan*, *Subrahmaṇian*, *Gaṇēśan* etc but not *Sadhāśivan*. In the Vēdhā the *Sadhāśiva nāmā* has been joined with *Praṇava* which is *Nirguṇa* and shown as *Brahmam*. In accordance with this we change *Śiva* into *Śivam* and have our name.

Some people have the names of places such as *Chidambaram* and *Srīrangam* as their names. *Śaivas* have the name *Panchāksharam*, *Namaśivāyam* and *Vaishnavas* have names such as *Bāshyam*, *Vēdāntham*. These names are related to philosophical principles. Although these names end in 'M' there is nothing special to speak about them because these are all in neuter gender.

But the name *Sadhāśivan* which ends in 'n' has a unique distinction. Although there is a name *Sadhāśivan*, (the Sanskrit name *Sadhāśivah* has become *Sadhāśivam* in Tamil) the name *Sadhāśivam* is widely prevalent and that is its distinction. From this it is seen that our ancients had considered as their goal *Sadhāśivam* which is the '*Nirguṇa Adhvaitha Thathvam*' rather than *Sadhāśivan* who, as *Saguṇa Mūrthi*, is connected with the world of duality (*Dwaitha Prapancham*).

Neuter gender is usually that of insentient things (*jada vasthu*). But the names like *Śivam*, *Vēdāntham*, *Avathāram*, *Jnānam*, *Śivajnānam* etc which though neuter in gender acquire the merit of the highest gender when they are names of persons. It is *Śivam* which is *Vēdāntham* - the end part of *Vēdhās* and it is also the *jnāna* which it gives. In a way all the things - movable and

immovable - are all its avathar, all that have their origin in Brahman. '*Janmāthasya yathah*'.

When this little '*jīvā bhāva*' goes and we become the infinite single *Ātmā* that stage is *Śivam*. It is to show to that it is eternal we add '*Sadha*' and have our names.

In *Kumāraswāmi*'s name, next to *Subrahmanīyam* we find that the name *Swāmināthan* is popular among Brahmins. *Kārthikēyan* has become abridged as '*Kārthik*' and we find that this name is being kept by many people. To some extent there is the name '*Guhan*'. Since he had given *upadēśam* to his father *Dakṣiṇāmūṛthi*, people have the name *Guruswāmi*, *Gurumūṛthi* which are also names of *Subrahmanya*. Some people have the name *Śivaguru*. *Dēvasēnāpathi*, although a Sanskrit name is to be found only rarely among Brahmins. The name Skanda is an important name of *Subrahmanya*. The *purāṇa* about him is itself called '*Skāntham*'. But the name *Kandaswāmi* is not being kept by Brahmins to the extent those other than Brahmins keep.

The names ending in 'm' - *Subrahmanīyam*, *Shanmugam* etc - are all related to *Sadhāśivam* and are names with philosophical associations. These are names which are got by adding one more face to the five faces of *Īśvarā* which the Vēdha manthras worship as *Sadhāśivam*.

* * *

THE BLISS OF 'SATH' AND 'CHITH' COMBINING IN SUBRAHMANYAM

About Shanmukha : We know that the *Śiva thējas* came out of *Paramēśvarā*'s eyes on his foreheads as sparks which became six babies and then the six joined together resulting in the *Subrahmanya Mūṛthi* with six faces, twelve hands. If there are five faces for *Śiva* there can only be five forehead eyes. If a spark

comes out from each there can only be five sparks and then five babies. But it was not only from *Śiva thejas* but the *Śiva-Sakthi* thejas that Subrahmanyam manifested. That is what the *Purāṇās* and *sāsthrās* say. The thejas of *Ambāl* who has within her *Sadhāśivan* - one of the Panchakruthya murthis - came out of the sixth face, that is 'adhō mukham' and created Shanmukham. In the Parabrahma which is Sathchithānandam - Sath - Chith - Ānandam - *Śivam* who is Sath and *Śakthi* who is Chith combined to create *Subrahmaṇya Mūrthi* who is happiness incarnate. In the *Ardhaṇārīśwarā Mūrthi* half is the Lord and half is *Ambāl*. But here even though *Subrahmaṇya* was brought forth by six faces the five faces of the Lord and the one face of *Ambāl* are equal!

Ambāl performs her important function of Anugraham (bestowing grace) through *Sadhāśivan*. We have seen earlier that it is only to show that anugraham which gives pleasures takes one to the experience of moksha *Praṇava* has been added to *Sadhāśivam*. The *Praṇava* became abridged to 'm' and *Sadhāśivan* became *Sadhāśivam*. For the same reason there is a Vedha manthra in which *Praṇava* is added to the *Subrahmaṇya* 'nama' and ends with 'Subrahmaṇyōm'. If the *Praṇava* has been added only once to *Sadhāśiva* in the case of *Subrahmaṇyam* it has been added three times. Do we not swear three times? Even the English people talk of 'Thrice blessed'. This is how the name *Subrahmaṇyam* came.

* * *

SATHYAM, ŚIVAM, SUNDARAM

But it is the name *Sadhāśivam* which as the parent of all the *Subrahmaṇya* 'nāmā' has the pride of place.

If it is merely the *Paramāthmā* which transcends the world of duality how is it useful to us who are ignorant (*ajnānis*)? That non-dual '*Āthma swarūpa*' is of great use to us in the form of love. If the

love is true, our hearts will melt in that love and without being aware of any great *sādhana* or jnana or Brahma Vidhyā etc we all become one with that Lord of love. It is that love which is *Śivam*.

Since it is not seen as something big and there is no need to see it as such it has no adjective as '*Mahā*' although *Īśvarā* who carries out the big function of conducting this world in *Māyā* is *Mahēśvara* with the title '*Mahā*'. The one who dissolves us in his grace with love does not have a title '*Mahā*'. But once we are dissolved in him it is over, it is the true (sathya) state for all times and therefore we add '*Sadhā*' to his name and call him '*Sadhāśiva*'.

Since the names of all other gods do not speak of the true realization (sathya *Sākshāthkāram*) through the simple means of love they do not have the adjective '*Sadhā*'. Because of the greatness of some of them we add the prefix '*Mahā*' to them. But for one who dissolves us in himself and is like the closest relative there is no need for *Mahā*. Because of his unique relationship, the relationship also goes and we become one with him for all time. Therefore the unique prefix '*Sadhā*'.

It is love which is *Śivam*. Therefore we have the name *Sadhāśivam*. Bliss is born out of love. But instead of keeping the name '*Ānandam*' there is to some extent the practice of keeping the name '*Śivānandam*'. Although these days '*Ānand*' is very much prevalent what has come through generations is *Śivānandam*. It is the neuter gender of the highest category. Another thing is that it is that love that is *Śivam* which is beauty also. Therefore we keep the name *Sadhāśivam*. But somehow there is no such name as *Śivasundaram*, probably because *Śiva* itself is '*sundaram*' it was thought that there is no need to add *Sundaram*. Sometimes the name *Śivapadhasundaram* is kept. There is also the name *Mīnākshisundaram* - a combination of *Ambāl* and *Śiva*. He is also *Kalyāṇasundaram*. Since he has decorated himself with the moon on his head he is *Sōmasundaram* and that name is kept. There are

also names like Rāmasundaram related to Rāma and Mōhanasundaram related to *Krishṇā*. That is a 'mōham' which destroys our *Māyā* (delusion). There is also the name *Shaṇmugasundaram*, to indicate the combination of *Śiva* and *Shaṇmugan*. Ladies too have the name 'Soundaram'.

Since it is only love that is beauty the base for all these is *Śiva*, the personification of love. It is not as if only in recent times *Brahmō Samāj* people have created the phrase, *Sathyam-Śivam-Sundaram* like *Sath-Chith-Ānandam*. When we see that in the tradition of the Tamil region we have been having the name *Sadhāśivam* - a combination of Sathyam and *Śiva* in the sabdha form and also the name Sundaram which is the beauty of love, the concept of *Sathyam-Śivam-Sundaram* has been there among us over a long period without our knowing it. May that *Śiva* which is Sathyam and Sundaram and love which is *Śiva* prevail and prosper over the entire world. For that may *Sadhāśivamūrthi* who is exclusively there for grace bestow it on us.

* * *

**PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING
NAMASKĀRAM**



NAMÔ NAMAH

THE MAHĀSWĀMI'S GRIEVANCE

All of you perform *namaskāram* to me treating me as a great person. But I too have the great desire to offer my *namaskāram* to those who are great. But because even at a very young age, when I was in no way qualified, the status of *Pitādhipathi* and the title of Jagadhguru and also the name of *Bhagavadhpādha* had come to me I missed the good fortune of paying obeisance to another person who was great. I very much feel for the situation in which I am accepting the *namaskārams* of all people and I am not in a position to offer obeisance to another.

* * *

ĀCHĀRYĀ'S RULE FOR A SANYĀSI

But *Āchāryā* has done something good in this respect. It is this: *Āchāryā* has reminded us: 'when you think that those of us who are *sanyāsis* are great and perform *namaskāram* we should not think that the *namaskāram* is meant for us. The *namaskāram* done by anyone anywhere belongs only to the *Paramāthmā*, the *Parāśakthi* who conducts the affairs of the universe'. Also in order that we do not accept your *namaskāram* as if they are meant for us he has made a rule which will appear simple.

* * *

ĀCHĀRYĀ AND NĀRĀYAṆA NĀMĀ

I have referred to the source of power (*sakthi*) for the conduct of this universe. *Āchāryā* has referred to that *sakthi* as 'Nārāyaṇa' in his *bāshyams*. There are several reasons for it. Without going into a discussion about it I shall mention one thing in particular.

Our country is one which has repeatedly analysed the metaphysical principles and founded the philosophies such as *Vēdāntha*, *Mīmāṃsa*, *Nyāya* etc. *Āchāryā* wrote his *bāshyam* keeping in view particularly those who are connected with these.

Although our country is famous for its metaphysical research it has a name in a bigger way - both good and bad name - for not being content with dry philosophy and giving several gods as *Mūrthis* which symbolize the philosophical principles and have life in them. Therefore *Āchāryā* has thought that, for the society which has got used to the *Mūrthi* aspect, he should not give wholly philosophical treatises but should give a 'nāmā' here and there which would appeal to the society. Then he must have considered the nāmā by which God should be referred to.

Although there are several gods we can broadly classify our people into *Śaivas* and *Vaishṇavas*. *Āchāryā* must have thought about which god to mention - *Śiva* or *Vishṇu*. *Āchāryā* was the incarnation of *Śiva*. Therefore he must have thought that he should not mention his own name. *Vishṇu* is very intimate to *Śiva*. *Śiva* is also intimate to *Mahāvishṇu*. It is for this reason that in all places where one *Mūrthi* was to be mentioned to refer to the source of this universe (*Jagath Kāraṇa Śakthi*) the great power of the universe (*Prapancha Mahā Śakthi*), *Saguna Brahman*, *Īśvarā* etc mentioned in *Vēdāntha* he has mentioned *Nārāyaṇa*.

In between I have talked of *Īśvarā*. Although it is generally understood that *Īśvarā* is *Śiva*, in *Vēdāntha Śāsthra* it is the *Saguṇa Brahman* which has that name. *Rāmānujāchāryā*, *Madhvāchāryā* and others too have used this name in the same meaning.

It may be asked 'Āchāryā has composed *Śivānandalahari* and other *Śiva sthōthrā*. How is it in all these he has praised himself (*Śiva*)?' The reason is that they are all bhakthi *sthōthrā*. *Āchāryā* had to sing the *sthōthrā* on different gods whom different people have as 'Ishta *Mūrthi*' to enable them to concentrate on those

forms. In so doing how can *Śiva* who is the important *Mūrthi* be kept out? Therefore he composed *sthōthrā* on *Śiva* also.

Āchāryā was without an identity for himself because he was as the form of 'Self' (*āhma swarūpam*). It was possible for him to identify himself with the mental attitudes of different people and show them the path for spiritual elevation. Do we not see that water which is colourless takes different colours according to the soil on which it flows? So when he composed *sthōthrā* for different gods he looked as if he identified himself as the devotee of each god for the sake of those who follow the path of bhakthi by worshipping that particular god. In such a situation when he composed *sthōthrā* on *Śiva* he did not think of himself as the avathāra of *Śiva* but as a devotee of *Śiva*. It is only if he had considered himself avathāra then it would amount to making the *sthōthrā* for himself. But when he is a *Śiva* bhaktha he can do as much *sthōthrā* as he wants of his *Bhagawān*, *Śiva*.

In his own Mutts, *Āchāryā* has kept *Śiva* - *Chandramouliśwarā* - as the main deity and the others as secondary. It may be asked why he did not give equal status to all the gods in the Mutt which is for all people. The reason is that he had not planned it that way. It was *Paramēśwarā* who gave to his avathār five spatika Lingas and asked him to install them in five different places where *pūjā* should be performed permanently to these Lingas. Following *Paramēśwarā*'s command *Āchāryā* installed two of the Lingas in two of his own Mutts - here in *Kānchi* Mutt and in the *Śrūngēri* Mutt. Since the Lingas were given by *Paramēśwarā* himself with the command that they should be installed and *pūjā* performed to them they had to be given the prime status. Having done like this in two Mutts *Āchāryā* had to prescribe the same procedure for all the Mutts as *Śivapanchāyathana Pūjā* (*Śivapanchāyathana* is having *Śiva* as the central deity and *Ambikā*, *Mahāviṣṇu*, *Vināyakā* and *Sūrya* as other deities).

It may be asked ‘‘You said that *Āchāryā* was ‘*āthma swarūpam*’ without any identity when he wrote his *bāshya*. If so he should have remained like that. Why should he have the identity of *Śiva avathāra* and feel ‘How can I talk about myself and therefore I will mention *Nārāyaṇa*?’’ The answer is : ‘*Āthmaswarūpam*’ will not be writing books! It will do nothing. It will be just itself. Once he started writing a book it means that ‘*Āthma swarūpam*’ had gone and ‘*avathāram*’ had come. To put it more correctly it was only when it looked as if the state of ‘*Āthmasākshāthkāram*’ had gone and he thought that he was the avathār which had the duty to do things for the sake of nurturing *dharmā* in the world, he started writing books. In that stage if it is avathār the question will arise whose avathār it was, the answer to which will be *Śiva avathāram*. Therefore it would not be proper for the ‘avathāra *Śiva*’ to talk of the ‘original’ *Śiva* and that it would be fine and in order by way of conciliation and showing respect if *Vishṇu* is spoken of in his bashyam. All in all, *Āchāryā* has given the name *Nārāyaṇa* to the original source of the universe. The greatest truth embedded in these books is Adhvaitham – the identity between *Jivāthmā* and *Paramāthmā*. In this when one who is the avathāra of *Śiva* mentions the name of *Vishṇu* it shows also ‘Hari Hara Adhvaitham’ (that *Vishṇu* and *Śiva* are one).

When *Mahāvishṇu* has several names in *Sahasranāmam* the reason why *Āchāryā* chose *Nārāyaṇa nāmā* is that it is that name which comes in the *Ashtāksharī* which is the greatest manthra for *Mahāvishṇu*.

Ayanam means the way, path. It also means the destination reached by that way or path. *Nārāyaṇa* is ‘Ayanan’ for the *jīvās*, the ‘nara’ in both meanings. He is *Brahma Vidhyā Śāsthra* which is the way for redemption. He has said (in *Gītā* as *Krishṇā*) ‘*Adhyāthma vidhyā vidhyānam*’. He is also the Brahman which is attained through that vidhya. That is why when reciting the names

of Adhvaitha Vidhyā Gurus it starts with *Nārāyaṇa*. Therefore it is very appropriate to mention *Nārāyaṇa* in the Brahma Vidhya Sasthra.

The name of *Nārāyaṇa* is combined with *Sankara* and we have the name *Śāṅkaranārāyaṇan*. In the Southern part of Tamil Nadu there is a holy place where there is a *Mūrthi* in which both are together as one *Mūrthi*, thus showing the unity between *Śiva* and *Vishṇu*. The *Mūrthi* is called *Śāṅkaranārāyaṇa*

There was a gentleman who, though a *Smārthā*, was like a 'Vīra Śaiva' who believed that only *Paramaśiva* is God. My saying *Nārāyaṇa* when he did *namaskāram* to me was embarrassing to him. I do not say it loudly. But he knew that it is the tradition in the Mutt. Therefore he was feeling uncomfortable. One day he asked me about it.

I asked him 'Are not the Upanishads common to all Hindus following all sampradhaya, both *Śiva bhakthas* and *Vishṇu bhakthas*? In that there is the *Skandōpanishad* pertaining to Skanda, *Śivakumara* in which it is said '*Vishṇōchcha hrudayam Śivah*' - '*Śiva* is in *Vishṇu*'s heart'. Therefore should not *Śiva* be the heart which gives life to the *Nārāyaṇa* 'nāmā' which I am saying?' He said 'Yes Yes' and went away satisfied.

But I have done it a bit cleverly because what I told him was only half truth. The other half is that in the first part of the same manthra it is said '*Śivasya Hrudayam Vishṇu*' - '*Vishṇu* is in *Śiva*'s heart'.

The fact is that both the statements are true - the full truth. There is the nucleus - the *hrudayam* - which is peaceful and without motion for the power which conducts the affair, the Dynamic Energy and within the static things there is the Dynamic Energy. The static principle is *Śiva* and Dynamic Principle is *Vishṇu*.

It follows from this that *Vishṇu* is responsible for all that happens in this world. It also follows that all action should be dedicated to him.

It is not that *Āchāryā* only has stated this in his time but from time immemorial, from a time which cannot be identified, *sāsthrās* have taught us :

*Kāyēnavāchā manasēndriyairvābudhyāthmānāvā prakruthēh swabhāvāth
Karomi Yadh-Yath sakalam parasmai Nārāyaṇāyēthi samarpayāmi*

Activity does not mean only what is done by the body. Thinking in the mind, analyzing with the buddhi and whatever we do as *jivāthmā* is all action. Even *dhyāna* is action. Except the state of *samādhi* everything is action. 'Prompted by natural guṇa whatever I do by way of speech, with buddhi and the sense organs and the organs of action I dedicate to *Nārāyaṇa*, the Supreme' - this is the meaning of the *śloka*.

I have mentioned the name *Śankaranārāyaṇan*. *Āchāryā* himself has used it in an important context. In his *Praśnōthra Rathnamālikā*, before concluding there is the question 'who is referred to as Bhagawan and *Mahēswara*?' Our *Ādhi Āchāryā* who stood for conciliation, instead of saying *Śiva*, *Vishṇu*, he says that it is the one *Āthmā* which combines in itself both *Śiva* and *Vishṇu*. For conveying this he does not use the word *Śiva*, *Vishṇu* or Hari Hara but says *Śankaranārāyaṇa*.

Kachcha Bhagawān Mahēśah? Śankaranārāyaṇāthmāikah

Therefore it is appropriate that *Śankara* has mentioned *Nārāyaṇa*'s name in a special way.

Āchāryā referred to the great principle which is the cause of universe as *Nārāyaṇa*. In the same manner he has given us the rule that when others do *namaskāram* to us we should pass it on to *Nārāyaṇa*.

* * *

ALL NAMASKĀRĀS ARE FOR NĀRĀYAṆA ONLY

It is only *Nārāyaṇa* who is the creator of everything and has given it a power (*śakthi*) who has the right to receive all the *namaskārams*. To whichever *Dēvathā* we may perform *namaskāram* it goes only to Kēśava. There is a *ślōka* '*Sarvadēva Namaskārah Kēśavam Prathigachchathi*'. Everyone knows that Kēśava is *Nārāyaṇa*. That is the name of *Vishṇu*. It is particularly the name of *Krishṇā*. The name occurs in *Vishṇu Sahasranāmam*. In his *bāshyam* on *Vishṇu Sahasranāmam* *Āchāryā* has given several meanings. What is relevant to us is : the four sounds 'ka' 'a' 'īśa' and 'va' combine to become *Kēśava*. 'Ka' is Brahma. 'A' is *Vishṇu*. 'īśa' is *Śiva*. Therefore the *Thrimūrthi* of Brahmā, *Vishṇu*, Rudra becomes '*Kēsā*'. One who is the Supreme Power and is keeping in his control the gods of *srushti*, *sthithi* and *samhāram*, that is '*Kēsā*' is *Kēśava*. That he is not just the god who performs the three functions but who is the source power of all the three. This is what *Āchāryā* refers to as *Nārāyaṇa*. Therefore when it is said that all the *namaskārams* done to all the *dēvathās* go to Kēśava, it means it goes to *Nārāyaṇa* only.

When the *namaskārams* done even to the *dēvathās* go to *Nārāyaṇa* only can the *namaskārams* done to human beings belong to them? These *namaskāras* also go to *Nārāyaṇa* only.

Therefore *Āchāryā* has laid down the rule for us : When anyone performs *namaskāram* to us we have to say '*Nārāyaṇa Nārāyaṇa*'. If the name is mentioned we will immediately remember the Lord. When we remember him we will immediately think 'He is the one who has the right to receive all the *namaskārams*. We should not rob what belongs to him' and we will pass on the *namaskāram* to him. That is why *Āchāryā* has laid down the rule for *Nārāyaṇa Smaraṇam*.

* * *

TRUE SMARANĀM

If *Nārāyaṇa* is merely repeated it is only *Nārāyaṇa* 'vachanam' and not '*smaraṇam*'. '*Smaraṇam*' is to think deep of something in the mind. It has to be repeated whole-heartedly. But what happens in practice is that when a *sthōthrā* or manthra is repeated often it becomes a routine. Instead of the mind dwelling on the meaning of what is repeated it keeps thinking of something else while the mouth is repeating something. If the name *Nārāyaṇa* is merely repeated without thinking of it in the mind it will become a blemish (*dōsham*). When misappropriation that takes place between persons is an offence, is it not a great offence to misappropriate what belongs to *Bhagawān*? Unless the *sanyāsi* is extremely careful all the time when so many people perform *namaskāram* to him daily, his repetition of *Nārāyaṇa* nama is likely to become a routine and he will incur the blemish.

* * *

TRUE SANYĀSI AND NAMASKĀRAM

A true *sanyāsi* - a hundred percent *sanyāsi* - has no duty to perform. He is not indebted to anyone in any manner. Therefore he need not have to think of the welfare or sufferings of others. In such a state if someone does *namaskāram* to him he need not have to think of their good. If he starts thinking like that then his buddhi will be after knowing whether the good he had thought of had happened. If he allows his mind to go after the affairs of several people what will happen to the '*āthma vichāram*' which he has to do with one-pointed attention? The greatest *dharmā* for him is to keep doing '*āthma vichāram*' all the time. If he does not do it he is not a *sanyāsi*. If he is not a *sanyāsi* it means no one need do *namaskāram* to him! Therefore when someone does *namaskāram* to a true *sanyāsi* he should think of his goal, the *Āthmā* as

Nārāyaṇa who controls the world of duality and leave to *Nārāyaṇa* as his concern whatever be the good or bad of the one who does *namaskāram*.

Vidhyāranya had stated about this very clearly in his book '*Jīvan Mukthi Vivēkam*'. He has used the word '*Brāhmaṇa*' in the sense of a *Brahma Jnāni* that is a *sanyāsi* who is a *Brahma Jnāni* - a hundred percent *sanyāsi*, a *Jīvan Muktha* and given a quotation from *Mahābhāratha*. In that *Mahabharatha śloka* it is said that such a true *sanyāsi* is 'without *namaskāram*' and without '*aśīrvadam*' - '*Nirnamaskāram, Nirāśisham*'.

If one is a true *sanyāsi* everything is *Āthma swarūpam* for him. In that case how can he do *namaskāram* to himself or do '*aśīrvadam*' to himself?

True, he sees others who do *namaskāram* as '*Āthma swarūpam*'. But they do not see like that but think that they are small and he is big (*Mahān*) and therefore do *namaskāram* to him. They all think that he will also bestow his '*aśīrvadam*' like others and therefore lot of people do *namaskāram* to him. When that is so if he remains unconcerned about them, will they not feel hurt? Would it not be good only if that *jnani* shows consideration to the attitude of these '*ajnānis*'?

Vidhyāranya raises this question and says in reply : 'It is for that purpose it has been laid down that when others do *namaskāram* to him instead of his remaining quiet he should say '*Nārāyaṇa*', become that *Nārāyaṇa*. *Nārāyaṇa 'sabdhham*' is representative of all '*asirvadam*'. He says '*Nikila āśīrvādha prathinidithvēna Nārāyaṇa sabdha prayōga*'.

Even if openly '*āśīrvādh*' is not done to the person who does *namaskāram*, pronouncing the *Nārāyaṇa 'nāmā*' is the antidote for the suffering of the person who does *namaskāram*. He had clarified that it is not the small suffering but the big suffering which is the

attachment to the world and as a remedy to it and to remove it saying the *Nārāyaṇa* nāmā has been prescribed.

* * *

SANYĀSĪ WHO IS MATĀDIPATHI AND NAMASKĀRAM

Whatever has been said till now is for the true *sanyāsi*. But there is the good, bad and indifferent in everything. There are *sanyāsis* like us who are not hundred percent true *sanyāsis*. But 'half' *sanyāsis* (*Mahāswāmi* laughs heartily). Probably half also may be on the high side! It will be fifty percent! Therefore we can call them 'pass-mark' *sanyāsis*. Can such 'pass-mark' *sanyāsis* like us, remain unconcerned when others do *namaskāram* leaving everything to *Nārāyaṇa*?

There may be some who have not understood whom I meant by saying 'pass mark' *sanyāsis* like us. I said that a *sanyāsi* has no duty to perform. The only one duty for him is '*āthma vichāram*'. He who has given up duties towards wife, children etc has no duty towards the society. Therefore he has to remain unconcerned, leaving the *namaskāram* to *Nārāyaṇa*.

But some of us are here as Matādipathi and *Guru Pītam*. It is those whom I referred to as 'pass-mark' *sanyāsis* as different from others. The reason why it is so is that once we have taken the title of Guru then we have also taken up ourselves duties. We have the great duty of relating ourselves to the society - treating all the people in the society as a community of *śiṣhyas* and conduct them on the right path. Therefore if we remain unconcerned about them we will be guilty of failing in our duty. We have the duty to do all that is necessary to see that the *śiṣhyas* follow the right path and all that is good happens to them. When that is so and the *śiṣhyas* do *namaskāram* to us thinking that we will do good to them if we think 'we are not concerned about your welfare or sorrow. It is your

concern. You do whatever you want' and leave it to *Nārāyaṇa*, will he accept it?

I tell you 'Give subscription for *Vēdha rakshaṇam*, give donation for building temple towers'. Daily I accept your *biksha*. These are all things that I accept in material form. In addition I also assign various jobs to you : 'Collect handful of rice; go to the hospitals and distribute *prasād*; dig tanks for the cattle' etc. If, like this, I take money and also your labour and when you do *namaskāram* can I cut off myself saying that there is no relationship between us?

* * *

THE POWER OF 'ĀŚĪRVĀDHAM' (BLESSING)

But if I give '*āśīrvādh*' will it really do good to you? Does it have that power? It is the '*āśīrvādh*' given by those who have real power of penance (*thapas śakthi*) and are in touch with *Paramāthmā* which will have the power. But the '*āśīrvādh*' given by others will do a little good temporarily because every good thought has some power to do good.

The fun here is that it is for the one who cuts off himself unconcerned because of his dedication to the spiritual line and the experience he has had in that, the power of '*āśīrvādh*', grace materializes naturally. Even without his knowing it, even without his intending it his '*āśīrvādh*' will go to the one who does *namaskāram* and do good to him - just as a fully ripened fruit bursts on its own and gives its juice to whoever opens his mouth.

The situation in which those like us instead of being fully committed only to '*swānubhūthi*' take upon ourselves all the concerns of everyone and are unable to do what is necessary to have that '*anubhūthi*' there is the great danger of our very concern for others distracting and dragging us away. It is a great risk. To the extent that we are able to escape from such a risk and perform

the duties of the guru to the world without causing hurt to the spiritual goal and succeed in doing things without violating the limits, the power of 'āśīrvādhām' will materialize.

* * *

NĀRĀYAṆA IS THE BASIS FOR THE POWER OF ĀŚĪRVĀDHAM

Even then the basis for that power (*śakthi*) is only *Nārāyaṇa*. This should never be forgotten. If we see that not an atom can move without him 'āśīrvādh' also will yield fruit in practice only if he wills it. Therefore while on the one side we should not think that we are not concerned with *namaskāram* we should not also think that our *āśīrvādhām* by itself has power and give it. So what should be done is : When you prostrate before us we have to say *Nārāyaṇa*, think of *Nārāyaṇa* and do *namaskāram* to him mentally and pray. 'Please bestow your 'āśīrvādhām' on these children that good should happen to them'.

* * *

LIFTING THE HAND AS A SIGN OF 'ĀŚĪRVĀDHAM'

Because of the constraints of our 'status' we cannot do our prayer by bringing our hands together in 'anjali'. When you do *namaskāram* to us you all expect that we ourselves will and should give 'āśīrvādhām'. You may be disappointed if we have to do *namaskāram* to someone else - the source of all 'āśīrvādhams'. Would it not be comforting if 'āśīrvādhams' comes from the one to whom *namaskāram* is done?

People go to someone who they think is great to get 'āśīrvādhams' because *Nārāyaṇa* cannot be seen and the 'āśīrvādhams' he gives cannot be heard.

But if the devotees are matured and are aware of the 'sampradhāyam' (tradition) they should think that he is also the representative of *Nārāyaṇa* and if *namaskāram* is done to him it will go to *Nārāyaṇa* and *Nārāyaṇa*'s '*āśīrvādham*' will come through him and do *namaskāram* saying '*Namō Nārāyaṇa*'. Those who have received upadesam of '*Āshtākshara manthra*' to say *Namō Nārāyaṇa* prefixing it with *Pranava*. But somehow it is not so in practice. It is a good practice and it would be nice if it is given new life. At least if the one who does *namaskāram* says the *Nārāyaṇa nāmā* the person who accepts the *namaskāram* will remember the '*nāmā*' and become aware that the *namaskāram* actually belongs to *Nārāyaṇa*.

Whatever it may be if *namaskāram* is done to someone, only if there is some response from the latter indicating grace, the one who does *namaskāram* will feel satisfied.

Although we cannot speak out the '*āśīrvādham*' (*āśīr vāchanam*) and we have to say only *Nārāyaṇa* those who come and prostrate will have satisfaction only if at least a hand gesture is made by the person accepting the *namaskāram* as a symbol of bestowing grace. That is why although we pass on mentally your *namaskāram* to *Nārāyaṇa* we have to lift our hand as a token of doing '*āśīrvādham*' - lifting the hand which has to do *anjali*. The hand which has to do *anjali* to him has to be lifted as a sign of giving '*āśīrvādham*'.

* * *

HIS PRAYERS AND THE FAITH OF THE DEVOTEES

All these years you have been coming in crowds and doing *namaskāram* to me and I have also tried my best to pray to him mentally on your behalf and for your good. Yet, if any of your prayers have yielded fruits your faith is the important reason for it more than my effort. I wonder if I can pray on your behalf to the

same extent that you have faith in me. That is why I said that whatever good has happened to you is the fruit of your faith - what you think to be the fruit of my *āśīrvādh*am. Finally, the real cause for your desire being fulfilled is the grace that *Nārāyaṇa* has in his mind for you without my intervention.

When a big name is given to someone and thousands of people do *namaskāram* and say 'It is because of your '*āśīrvādh*am' such and such thing happened' instead of being under the illusion that we have the authority to give '*āśīrvādh*am' it is necessary to be guarded. Even a little mistake in this would amount to misappropriating *Nārāyaṇa*'s property.

* * *

HIGH STATUS

Although for all outward appearance there is a *Pītam* and we claim a status, the fact is that our job is to carry a load like a daily wage earner. Just as a coolie carries the load for others we too carry a load. Just as he carries the load physically we carry your *namaskāram* in our mind and add it to the weight of the prayer we do on your behalf and reach it to *Nārāyaṇa*. But the question is whether we know the sathyam that a coolie knows. I refer to the sathyam the coolie knows that what he carries belongs to someone else and his job is to unload it at the desired place. If we do not unload this load of *namaskāram* at *Nārāyaṇa*'s feet, he will deal with us properly. Just as what the coolie carries is a load for him we should also think that the *namaskāram* being done to us is a load and not a homage paid.

Vidhyāraṇya has cautioned the *sanyāsis* with a quotation from *Mahābhārata* : '*Sammānān maraṇādīva*'. That is if he is a real *sanyāsi* he should consider all respect and appreciation paid to him as death. He also says '*Narakādīva*' which is more fearful than

‘*marañādiva*’. Death is a state in which nothing is known but ‘*naraka*’ (hell) is all cruel.

That is for the true *sanyāsi*! Before saying that he should consider homage paid to him as death it is said that he must think of the society as a snake, be afraid of it and run away from it : ‘*Ahēriṇa gañāth bīthah sammānān marañādiva*’.

But those like us who are kept only to advise the society about what is good and prompt them to do good have to be always in the midst of people. When that is so will not the people honour us who have been given a *Pitam* status as *Matādipathi*? We ourselves go places by laying down conditions about how we should be honoured consistent with the prestige of our *Pitam*, status etc! We have also laid down the procedure that people can come to us only if they extend to us the prescribed honour.

This, of course, cannot be avoided. It is only if the *śishyas* conduct themselves with humility and obedience towards the Guru *Pitam* the *upadēśam* given by the guru and his grace will get into the *śishya* well. Therefore they have to do the honour. We have also to accept it as if to show we do not reject it.

While doing ‘*sammān*’ what is important is honouring. Money that is offered is only secondary. But here in Tamil Nadu it is only when money is given they call it ‘*sammān*’. In the North many institutions including Governments give *sammān* like *Kālīdās Sammān*.

I have been telling that those like us who have the title of a guru and are also *sanyāsis* – and not *sanyāsis* in the real sense – cannot prevent you from offering *sammān* to us.

What should be done is that we should allow you to do *sammān* to us. At the same time we should not accept it! How is that possible? Is it not contradictory?

As I said earlier we have to respect the practice of the *śishyas* offering *sammān* to the guru and also we have to show as if we have accepted it so that you will have the satisfaction that the guru has accepted your *sammān*. Thus it is a show. But our attitude (*Bhāva*) should be : 'We have to do like this for the sake of the practice that obtains in the world. But if we really think that this *sammān* is for us then we are finished'. We have to accept it, repeating the *Nārāyaṇa nāmā* and as his servant and make it over to him.

I said in whatever manner the honour is done it is '*sammān*'. Fortunately, people like me are so placed that we cannot be honoured with titles. Since it is thought that giving titles to the guru is like giving title to the *Bhagawān*, *sammān* is largely in the form of money. Otherwise how will the Mutt function? It is a Mutt which is being conducted according to the commandment of our *Ādhi* Guru, *Nārāyaṇa*- all institutions, homes and the country are conducted by him only - here it is a little more in that the Mutt is of him, conducted by him and for him; therefore we accept the *sammān* which is offered in the form of money. Even if you do not give on your own, we 'beg' with authority and take it from you!

The *sammān* which comes in the form of *namaskāram* should be accepted with the thought 'this does not belong to us at all. If through us something good happens this *sammān* belongs to *Nārāyaṇa* who makes that good happen. We are only holding it like a coolie'. Due to our love for the devotees we should carry that load cheerfully - temporarily - and unload it before *Bhagawān*. Till it is unloaded it is a load which we carry. But if it is not unloaded and appropriated by us it will become a permanent load of sin. The plight of one who receives the *namaskāram* is so risky!

* * *

ONE WHO DOES NAMASKĀRAM IS FORTUNATE

On the other hand if we look at the one who does *namaskāram* it appears he is fortunate. The fortune is that he just offloads his weight and remains carefree. Even as he prostrates before someone he considers great he thinks 'he will take care of our problems' and drops his load. It is said that it is 'Na mama' (not mine) which has become 'Namah'. True *namaskāram* is done with such an attitude.

But mostly the *namaskāram* done by people will not be 'hundred percent' *namaskāram* but a kind of 'pass-mark' *namaskāram*. Even then at least when he does the *namaskāram* he will drop the load and be carefree. This is what we see in practice.

At a very young age the good fortune of doing *namaskāram* to someone and drop before him the load and becoming light was lost to me or taken away from me. It is the 'status' which robbed me of this.

* * *

NAMASKĀRAM BY SANYĀSI:

A true *sanyāsi* who is a 'jīvan mukthā' will not be concerned whether *namaskāram* is done or not. For him others performing *namaskāram* to him or his doing *namaskāram* to others is immaterial because he is Brahman without seeing the difference between him and others. When this is so, *Āchāryā* asks 'Praṇamēth kam'? 'To whom *namaskāram* is to be done?'

*Nāmādhibhyah parē bhūmni swarājyē chēth sthithō(a) dwayē
Praṇamēth kam thathāthmājñō na kāryam karmañā thadhā*

The import of the *ślōka* is : For one who has realized the *āthmā* which is non-dual, has transcended name, place and everything and is stable in that state of freedom what is there to be

gained by *karmā*? All *karmās* relate to external things. When there is nothing for him outside himself what does he gain from *karmā*? To whom is he to do *namaskāram*?

But such 'hundred percent' *sanyāsis* will be rare. Most of the *sanyāsis* will be striving for 'āthmānubhūthi' or now and then they will be touching that state. Therefore there is no bar to them to do *namaskāram* to *Dēvathā Mūrthi* or the *āchāryās* of olden times. (*Purvāchāryās*).

Here too but for one or two exceptions the *sāsthrās* applicable to us do not permit prostrating. We are to do what is called 'Dhanda vandanam' - rotating the 'dhandam' in a particular form of anjali and touching with that.

* * *

THE PRINCIPLE UNDERLYING 'DHANDAM'

The *namaskāram* which you do is also called *Dhandakāra Namaskāram*. But that has a different meaning. There also 'dhandam' means a stick. But it is not real stick; it is falling like a stick that falls. If you hold a stick on the ground it remains straight. But if the grip is given up it falls flat on the ground. The mind of a *jīvā* is straight like a stick that stands vertical. It is like that due to ego. It is ego that holds it. If that grip of ego is given up then the mind will lie low. By being like that it will attain the highest state. Falling flat on the ground like a stick when the grip on which has been given up signifies the state of the mind lying low. That is why such a *namaskāram* has come to be called 'Dhandakāra Namaskāram'. If this principle is not understood and *namaskāram* is done it is futile.

In Tamil we refer to something useless as 'dhandam'. Is not a 'dhandam' a broken part of a tree? When it is a part of the tree it has life in it. When it is cut off from the tree it is dead. That is why

what is useless is referred to as 'dhandam'. This body of ours which we nurture by eating and by decorating will also be 'dhandam' unless there is life in it by His grace. It is with this view that it is made to fall flat before great persons who have some aspect of His *śakthi*.

When it is said that the body is 'dhandam' it is in fact the mind that is in it and controls it which is 'dhandam'. The body is merely an instrument. The mind should think 'it is the Lord who controls and directs me. He only has to direct me in the proper way. He only can stop all actions and give the state of peace'. With such a thought the mind should be laid down before Him and that is *namaskāram*. As a *prāyaschitham* for having directed the body in the wrong ways, the mind makes the body fall before Him like a 'dhandam' and earns *puṇya*. The import here is to treat the mind as 'dhandam' and offer it to him.

If we get fever we become weak and are unable to walk. From where do we get that *śakthi*? That is what *Īśwarā* has given. Falling flat during *namaskāram* signifies the sentiment : 'This 'my *śakthi* is in fact your *śakthi*. I am offering it to you'.

* * *

'DHANDAM' CARRIED BY A SANYĀSĪ

The 'dhandam' that we (*sanyāsis*) hold is also for controlling the mind. The 'dhandam' is used as a weapon to beat with and suppress. Since the important function of the State is to control the people in such a manner that they do not take to wrong ways, and to put down enemies, Statecraft itself is called '*Dhanda nīthi*'. In the same manner holding a 'dhandam' has been laid down for us as a symbol of controlling the mind. It is not merely a symbol. When a guru gives formal initiation and hands over the 'dhandam' after infusing in it the '*manthra śakthi*' the 'dhandam' really acquires the power of controlling the mind.

Just as the machines discovered by science have the power in the external world manthras have the power in the internal. Electricity which gives shock when touched by the hand can be touched by a stick. In the same manner our 'dhandam' is a tool that protects us from the shock of the indriyas (sense organs). The aerial is able to attract the radio waves. The lightning rod absorbs the shock of lightning. Our 'dhandam' is also like this. Since, in our case, it is the symbol for the mind and also its armour as a sign of offering the mind to *Bhagawān* or great men we do the *namaskāram* with the 'dhandam'. Yet the attitude of humility that one develops by falling flat on the ground is not in this.

* * *

WHEN HUMILITY ATTAINS FULLNESS

The attitude of humility comes more when doing *namaskāram* to a great person who is physically present before us than when doing to *Bhagawān* or great persons of yore.

The gods have great power. We believe that the great men (Mahā purushas) of yore had also divinity in them. We cannot think of them except as divine. When we who are small persons with a little power fall before such persons of great power there is nothing special about it.

But what do we think of the great persons whom we see? Even if we consider them as god we do not find them being at the level of divinity all the time. We see that they do several things like ordinary human beings only. We think very high of real gods and the great persons of yore without raising any question. That is why we do not consider the great persons of today for what they are but say that they are the incarnation of a great person of yore and do *namaskāram* to him. Whatever may be the practical situation even

after noticing such a difference if we fall flat before the great men of today it is in this our attitude of humility shows itself well.

* * *

THE LIVING GREAT COMMAND MORE RESPECT

From the difference I mentioned we may think that we have to show greater respect to great men of the past and the *Dēvathā Mūrthis* than to the existing great men. But how is it in practice? It is true that we have a lot of bhakthi for *Dēvathā Mūrthis*. But we do not go to them with respect. There is some respect also but that is not an important aspect. Bhakthi is something which cannot be defined. It is a combination of several aspects of love. It is also not possible to define our approach to *Dēvathās* to whom we have bhakthi. We can only say that it is something that happens without our knowing through our buddhi how we approach. Respect will also be an aspect of this. Or it may not be! We take liberty with the *Dēvathās* and do also 'Nindhā sthuthi' (praise by using words of abuse or condemnation).

If we take the great men of the past it appears that we do not take so much liberty with them. The respect to them is more than what is shown to *Dēvathās*. But instead of respect being the important aspect we show the other aspects of bhakthi equally.

If great persons of our time come before us the aspect of respect becomes important. Whether this is according to our concept of '*Deiva śakthi*' (divine power) is a different matter. But the respect we show to god, great men of the past and the great men of our time is inversely proportional to the ranking we give them. Aspects of bhakthi such as love, relationship and feeling of familiarity not being on the higher side the aspect of respect to them looks prominent.

It is not alone the great men of the religious field; whether it is political heavy weights, party leaders, the intellectuals, those who have acquired merit in arts, those who are rich etc it is respect that is foremost in our approach.

However great the *Dēvathās* may be that greatness is natural to them. Therefore we do not consider it something big and show special respect. We think that the great men of the past had aspects of divinity in them and therefore they are great and thus take it easy. It is only when we see people like us who are in our midst and are superior to us in spiritual experience or in intelligence or money or status we get the feeling of respect towards them in a special way because although they are one among us they have attained a greatness which we do not have. Therefore it is only in doing *namaskāram* to them we get the feeling that 'we are small'.

* * *

HIS MISFORTUNE

I have two unlucky prizes which the other *sanyāsis* do not have. The general rule is that *sanyāsis* also should do *namaskāram* to other *sanyāsis* who are senior to them. Here the seniority is not on the basis of age but on the basis of the number of times that one has performed Vyāsa *Pūjā*.

Every *sanyāsi* has to perform Vyāsa *Pūjā* on the Pūrṇima day in the month of Āshād. On this basis one who had taken sanyas at the age of twenty would have performed ten pujas till the age of thirty. Supposing a retired person takes sanyasam at the age of fifty five when the other one is twenty five years of age he will have done only five pujas when he is sixty years of age. If these two *sanyāsis* happen to meet, the *sanyāsi* who is old in age, that is sixty years, has to do *namaskāram* to the other one who is thirty and who has done ten pujas. In my case : Even after I became a *sanyāsi*

I had met many *sanyāsis* who had performed more *Vyāsa pūjās* than me. But I was not to do *namaskāram* to them and it was just the opposite. The reason for this is the 'Jagadhguru' title! Although I have understood this title to mean that the entire Jagath (universe) is Guru for me the rule of the Mutt is since all people in the world are the *śishyas* of the Jagadhguru the latter cannot even think of doing *namaskāram* to *śishyas*. Therefore it was not possible for me to do *namaskāram* even to those who were senior to me as yathis (*sanyāsis*).

There is another misfortune which is even greater and which is exclusive to me. Even the other *sanyāsis* who have had the title of Jagadhguru would have performed *namaskāram* to the 'Guru-Swāmi' who had anointed them with the title. Here too I have been unfortunate*.

(*It was only after the *Purvāchāryā* who had nominated *Mahā Periyavā* to the *Pītam* had attained *samādhi*, *Mahā Periyavā* could go to the former's place and accept the *Pītam*. Therefore from the time he took sanyas there was never a physical guru).

The good fortune of doing *namaskāram* which I have missed is there for all of you. I wish you should utilize it fully. In addition to doing *namaskāram* in the temples, go in search of great persons and do *namaskāram* to them. I have said that the feeling of respect is more in the case of the latter.

* * *

FOR HUMILITY TO GROW

Humility shines more in the *namaskāram* done with the feeling of respect than in bhakthi and *pūjā*. When we fall flat before a great person it is possible to give a form to this humility, experience it and feel happy about it. This action not only gives the

form to the attitude of humility (*vinaya bhāva*); the action itself adds strength for the attitude to grow more and more.

Have not our ancestors been doing *namaskāram* over the ages? Because of that, their thought born of humility would have become soaked in the action of *namaskāram* and strongly infused the attitude of humility in the action. When we who are the descendents do it that '*bhāvam*' which we have inherited will be there even without our knowing it.

* * *

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RISE AND FALL OF MAN

It used to be said with pride : 'All other animals are 'Thiryak' which means they grow horizontally; it is only man who grows vertically. He has been created like this because he is the highest in all the created species. But if this greatness leads him to a feeling of ego and self-praise he will have to go down below the level of the animal species. We have to understand that God has created us like this so that our thoughts and life do not, like the animals, end with sensual enjoyment but are of the highest level and make efforts that are necessary and reach the higher state and not meet downfall by self praise. To prevent such a downfall it is *namaskāram* by which we fall flat with humility will help. One who stands may fall and get injured. Even one who is sitting may fall. But one who lies flat on the ground cannot suffer a fall.

The higher the level from which one falls the more will be the harm. It is the same with high status. If one who occupies the high status commits a mistake and suffers a fall he will not be able to rise up and the world would laugh at him.

* * *

BOWING THE HEAD TO REDUCE EGO

Leave aside how the world treats such a person. What is spiritually good for a person? What kind of behavior will give him internal peace and satisfaction? Is it peaceful when we lift a weight or after we have unloaded it? Weight here does not mean only the weight of the difficulties and sorrows of the world but ego, haughtiness, self-glorification. If that is unloaded there will be permanent peace. The act that helps in this is bringing the head which is above all the organs in level with them and do *namaskāram* by being flat. It is an act which treats the head as just another part of the body and does not give it the most important status. If others make us bend our head it is shame. But if we do it ourselves it is a gift gained. It is the gift of 'vinaya' (humility).

* * *

WHY FALL FLAT WITH FACE DOWN?

Namaskāram is done by falling flat with the face down to ensure that we do the act with concentration and we do not look here and there. We bend our head towards the ground.

The sense organs which pull a *jīvā* to the external things are all in the front side of the body. Lying down flat on the face and doing *namaskāram* is to turn all of them away from the world.

Falling upside down, showing the back etc are all dishonourable. But 'honour' is important only when the ego 'I' is there. Life cannot be without the 'I' attitude, honour and dishonour. If these are absent we will be kings - kings who have gained victory over '*Āthmā*', a '*Jīvanmuktha Raja*'. In that stage there is no *namaskāram* at all. But to lead life in our state we will observe honour and dishonour where it is necessary. We will keep them little suppressed. But there are places where we will throw them out. These are the sannidhis of *Īśwarā* and in the presence of

great men. There, there is no need for honour. We will fall flat showing back up. Showing the back thus is the small step for the victory over *Āthmā*.

When we stand before those to whom our regards are due we should not show our back. Even when taking leave of them, instead of turning and showing the back, we have to keep moving backwards without showing our back. But when we fall flat we have to show the back.

During dhyana it should be vertical position. The head also should not bend. But in a state of immaturity that may lead to egoistic glorification. That has to be treated with the medicine of *namaskāram*.

Just as water does not remain at a higher level but flows down to the lower level, only if we are low in our mental attitude the 'rain' of grace will come to us and remain. It is as a symbol of that we place the body on the floor from head to foot. This is called *Sāstānga Namaskāram*.

* * *

SĀSHTĀNGA NAMASKĀRAM

This means *namaskāram* in which eight parts of the body touch the ground. Usually what people consider as eight parts are : The forehead, two shoulders, two hands, the torso (chest and stomach portion) two legs. Since these touch the ground people think it is 'Sa' 'Ashta' 'Angam' - *sāstāngam*.

Someone has written how the eight have been mentioned differently. According to one such explanation they are the head, the chin, two ears, two hands, two legs. When the head, that is the top of the head touches the ground the chin cannot touch the ground. Only one of them can touch the ground at one time. Not only that when we are lying upside down how can the ears touch

the ground? Therefore this kind of *Sāstāngam* should be understood to mean the combination of different parts touching the ground in different types of action.

One of such actions is to lie down in a manner that the head touches the ground. When we talk of *namaskāram* with the whole body we think of the body particularly as the torso (the part which includes the chest and stomach). That is the part which contains the heart, the lungs, the organs of digestion and also the spine, all of which make for life in the body. If we lower the head to prevent the weight of ego affecting the brain the main body which gives life to the *jīvā* needs to be put down also. But in the present calculation that is not included.

Similarly there is another specification which leaves out the torso and the two legs. According to this the hand has been reckoned as the arm and the hand.

There are many more forms mentioned all of which will be confusing to read. We may wonder whether there are so many types in *namaskāram* and stop doing *namaskāram* itself! Therefore forget the different types I have mentioned. I shall now deal with only whatever great ancients who had known the *sampradhāya* have laid down.

In two of the old *sāsthrās*, of the eight parts seven are identical: One is *Vyāsa smruthi* :

*Dhōrbhyām padhbhyām jānubhyām wursā śirasā dhruśā
Manasā vachasā chēhi prañamō(a)shtāngam īrithah*

The other one : What is given as the words of Āpastambha Maharishi in 'Mahā Nyāsam' of *Paramēśwarā* Ārādhana about how to do *namaskāram* to Umā-Mahēśwarar:

*Wurasaāsirasā Dhrushtyā vachasā manasā thathā
Padhbhyām karābhyām karnābhyām prañamō(a)shtānga uchyathē*

According to the first *śloka* : 'Hands, feet, the knee joint, chest, head, eyes, manas and vāk.

According to the second : Chest, Head, eyes, vāk, manas, leg, hands and ears.

In both the *ślokas* 'manas' 'vāk' and 'eyes' have been mentioned. Here a question arises 'We are thinking that keeping on the ground the eight parts of the body is *Sāstānga Namaskāram*. How can manas and vak become part of it? Although the eyes are part of the body, how can they touch the ground?'

The reply to this is that these three, instead of being of the form of action, should be in our thoughts as '*bhāva*'. The mind should be lowered before the person to whom we do *namaskāram*. It is the same with vāk. His figure should be kept before the eyes and make them bow to him.

If these three which are *bhāvas* are excluded the remaining five are parts of the body.

According to one count, these five are the hands, the feet, the knees, chest and head. According to the other, chest, head, leg, hand and ear. In both the counts we get eight parts of the body.

Although the great men who have followed the *sāsthrās* (sishtas) accept both the *ślokas*, it is the second one which includes the ears that is being followed in practice.

From the point of view of *sāsthrās* the ear is an important part of the body. The *Vēdhās* which are the source for all *sāsthrās* are called *Śruthi* which are to be heard and practiced. The ear has the greatness of absorbing the 'Thanmathras' (subtle form of matter) of sound (*śabdham*) from the *ākāśa*. It is the belief that *Gangā* is in the ears. That is why at the conclusion of *Pranāyāmam* we touch the ear with the hand to purify it because it has been holding the nose and the exhaled air would have made it impure.

But how to do *namaskāram* in a manner that the ear touches the ground? When lying flat with the head, chest, stomach, the hands and legs touching the ground the person should turn only the face to the right and make the right ear touch the ground. In the same manner the face should be turned to the left and the left ear made to touch the ground.

Doing *namaskāram* involving the different parts of the body is useful not only for spiritual development but serves as a useful exercise. Several vibrations of the 'nādis' mentioned in *Yōga sāsthā* will occur and do good to the *āthmā*. Does not *Sūrya namaskāram* strengthen the body?

There is also a slightly different view. Even if we wish to do *namaskāram* according to *sāsthās*, in a big gathering it will be difficult to follow the procedure like turning the face to make the ears touch the ground etc. Therefore I feel that there is nothing wrong if the method I had mentioned first is followed - the forehead, the two shoulders, the two hands, the torso and the two legs touching the ground. *Namaskāram* also includes a prayer seeking pardon. Therefore even if there is any mistake in the procedure Bhagawan will pardon us.

* * *

PANCHĀNGA NAMASKĀRAM - GREATNESS OF MOTHERHOOD

All of you know that ladies do not perform *namaskāram* like men. What they do is called 'Panchānga *Namaskāram*'. Although those who had formulated the *sāsthās* have made the rule that the attitude of superiority should be discarded and the body should be made to lie flat on the ground they thought that the honour of motherhood of the ladies who are of the aspect of *Ambāl* should not be lowered. They thought that the body which carries the baby

during pregnancy and feeds it and nurtures it after the child is born should not be allowed to touch the ground. That is why Ashtangam has become Panchāngam for them. That mode of *namaskāram* also symbolizes that the lady should be pliable. It should be noted that there is a certain humility reflected in the very manner in which the body is shrunk and *Panchānga namaskāram* is done.

* * *

VANĀKKAM

This Tamil word means 'bending'. If we see this it appears that what ladies do is actually '*Vanakkam*'. Men can do *Vanakkam* by hand; above the hip they may bend the body and also the head little. But it is only the ladies who do the real *Vanakkam* with the body.

Like '*Vanakkam*', even the '*nāmā*' which is part of *namaskāram* has for its root 'nam' which is 'to bend'. 'Nam' is the verbal root, meaning 'bend'. When that becomes 'namanam' it will mean 'bending'. That is what *namaskāram* also is. When we consider it from this angle it is Panchāngam which is true *Vanakkam* rather than the body remaining straight like a staff in Ashtāngam.

* * *

MEN ALSO CAN DO PANCHĀNGA NAMASKĀRAM

For ladies it is mandatory that they should do only Panchanga *Namaskāram* and not Ashtangam. But there is no bar to men doing *Panchānga Namaskāram*. In the North people mostly do *Panchānga Namaskāram*.

In Dharma *Śāsthṛās* too both Ashtāngam and Panchāngam have been prescribed for men. It is said in one of several *śāsthṛās*

called 'Kalpas' written by rishis and which lay down all kinds of *karmās* that *Sāshtāngam* should be done only to deities, the guru, parents and mahāns who are equal to god and it should be only Panchāngam for all others. But this is not said in other 'kalpas'. It is therefore not necessary that this should be followed. We can follow what is now largely in practice.

Suppose there is a mahān or a sannidhi in a small place. There it will be difficult to do *Sāshtānga namaskāram*. In such a situation Panchāngam can be done.

The Tamil word '*Vañakkam*' originated on the basis of bending the body. Now because of love for Tamil this word has become official and is widely used. '*Vañakkam*' is indeed a beautiful word. But this word is now being used not symbolizing the attitude of bending but contrary to it as signifying opposition to another language. This is sad to note.

* * *

LOVE FOR THE COUNTRY AND PAROCHIALISM

Except in Tamil Nadu in all other parts of India people wish each other by saying '*Namasthē*'. In the word '*Namaskāram*' it is only '*Namah*' which conveys obeisance. *Namaskāram* represents the act of paying obeisance. In '*Namo Namah*', '*Siva Panchāksharī*', '*Nārāyaṇa Ashtaksharī*' etc we say only '*Namah*'. In the same manner, *Namasthē* means '*Vañakkam* to you'. In *Namasthē*, '*thē*' means 'to you'. Even in the Dravidian regions of Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala they have adopted '*Namasthē*' instead of an expression in their own language. It is only in Tamil Nadu '*Namasthē*' which is current all over India has been discarded and there is the practice of saying '*Vañakkam*'. Even here previously people were saying only *Namaskāram* which is the same as *Namasthē*. Although '*Vañakkam*' is a beautiful word, rich in

meaning, the object with which this has been brought into use is not good. People ought to have regional affinity. Regional culture has also to be protected and nurtured. Yet, it is a misconceived regional affinity to bring in the region in matters which are of an all India nature by deliberately pushing aside what is national.

Even so, considering electoral advantages people of other regions and even leaders when they come here want to show that they respect the practice of the region and say '*Varākkam*'. Although outwardly it is said like this in the heart of hearts they have a feeling of regret. Someone told me about this. He said when the whole country is going in a particular way for one region to cut itself away from that stream and follow a different way even if it be in small matters would amount to causing harm to national integration. Although he said this with reference to the usage of '*Varākkam*' the important point he made was with regard to 'archana' in Tamil in the temples of Tamil Nadu.

* * *

ARCHANA IN TAMIL

Since I have touched that topic I shall deal with this briefly. What the gentleman from the North told me was this: People all over the country including the States which are Dravidian do not ask that archana should be done in their mother tongue. It is true that no one in this country uses Sanskrit as mother tongue and no one speaks it. Still since all the basic texts of religion are in Sanskrit, in the matter of religion all have accepted Sanskrit as the lingua franca. In the temples which are meant not just for the people of the region but for the people of the whole country all *pūjās* are done including archana in Sanskrit only according to *sāstrās*. In our country where people who speak many languages, follow many traditions live this is of great help in getting the feeling of being united as a family. Therefore apart from conducting

everything according to *sāsthrās*, even for the sake of national unity from the practical point of view these matters have to be protected as they have been till now’.

‘Pilgrims come to the temples of our region from all over India. If you take the temple at Rameswaram half the pilgrims there will be from the North. Nowadays people are fond of travel and that too of visiting holy places. Facilities like L.T.C. are being provided in offices. Travel agents who arrange pilgrim tours are also increasing in number. Therefore if you see any temple from *Vaishṇōdevī* which is in Jammu and Kashmir in the North to Kanyakumari in the South you will find people of all regions in the temple as if it is a miniature India. When this is so how could it be that *pūjā* should be done in the languages of these regions?’ – the gentleman of the North kept speaking on these lines.

Since I too have paid attention to this question of Tamil archana for a long time and discussed it with vidwans who are well trained in *Āgama Sāsthrās*, *Dharma Sāsthrās* etc and have come to a conclusion which is a compromise I mentioned it to him :

‘Generally ‘*ārāadhanā*’ in temples should be done in Sanskrit only. All the rituals that are performed in the temple should continue to be according to ‘*Āgama*’ and ‘*Thanthra*’ *Sāsthrās*. For example if *Kumbhābbhishēkam* (purification ceremony after construction/renovation etc) is being performed in a temple it must be done in Sanskrit according to *sāsthrās*. This is a general rule. But if we look into the different aspects of *pūjā* in the temples, we find that there are aspects which provide space for the use of regional language also. In *pūjā* there are several services (*upachārās*) starting from *Panchōpachāram* (offering of gandham, *pushpam*, *dūpa*, *dīpa* - *neivēdyam*) then ‘*shōḍaśa upachāram*’ and finally Chathussashti (64) ‘*upachārās*’. *Sāsthrās* have clearly provided that at the end of the procedure for *pūjā*, *sthōthrā* can be recited, songs can be sung in regional languages and even dance

performed. When we carefully analyse several *sāsthrās* we find there is nothing wrong in including the aspect of archana in the slot provided for recitation of *sthōthrā* in regional languages. Therefore we concluded that, as a compromise, after doing archana in Sanskrit archana can be done in the regional languages also.

‘Do not interfere with the archana in Sanskrit which is prevalent all over the country. Do not do anything which will hurt the feelings of the people of other States and also those in Tamil Nadu who feel that the practice being followed till now should not be changed. Without changing the existing practice, Tamil archana can also be included. No change in what prevails; only an addition to it. It is not Tamil archana instead of archana in Sanskrit but in addition to it’.

‘This pertains to the worship in temples. Archana can be done in Sanskrit or Tamil as desired by individual devotees’ - this is what I told him. He realized that in the arrangement I suggested there is no harm caused to unity and national integration and therefore accepted it.

For doing archana in Tamil we need ‘*Nāmāvalis*’ (a schedule which contains a chain or row of names of the Lord) - 108 - ashtōthra (satha) or 1000 (sahasram). But till now we do not have any of these composed by great men. Therefore these have to be composed now.

But what is to be noted and followed carefully is that *Nāmāvalis* only should be compiled in Tamil but the names that form the *Nāmāvalis* should be the old names. That is they should be those names which were spoken by great men of yore of Tamil Nadu. There is a special ‘authority’ and ‘sanctity’ to the words of those great men who had actual experience of God (*Īswarānubhavam*).

Such 'nāmās' (holy names) should be selected and compiled as 108 or 1000. That is, something is not to be created new but it should be a compilation of the old. If the power of manthra (manthra *sakthi*) and divine power is to be there in the words this procedure should be followed. The names used for archana should be those which came from the mouth of the great devotees of olden times.

Names of *Śiva* (*Śiva nāmā*) should be selected from *Thevāram*, *Thiruvāchakam*, *Thirumurai* etc. Names of *Vishṇu* should be taken from the *Divya Prabhandham* of *Āzhvārs*, the names of *Ambika* from the *sthōthrā* of *Abhirāmi Bhattar*. Thus, names should be taken only from the books of experienced great men and women.

Most of the *Nāmāvalis* in Sanskrit are usually taken from basic *sthōthrās* having the same names and arranged in the same order. For example in *Vishṇu Sahasranāma sthōthrā* there are 1000 names. Names are taken from this in the same order and for each name the *Pranava* is prefixed and *Namah* is suffixed. Since the basic text is in the poetry form of *sthōthrā* they can be memorized easily. Then taking each name from it, prefixing 'Om' and suffixing 'Namah' they can also be easily memorized and archana can be performed repeating these names without having to look into a book.

But if it is *Nāmāvali* in Tamil the names will not be in the same *sthōthrā*. It will be necessary to take them from several *sthōthrās*. There is therefore no scope here for memorizing the basic text and using the names from that by prefixing 'Om' and suffixing 'Namah'. If a *Nāmāvali* is not in the form of a poetry it can be memorized only with some difficulty. We may take it that this does not matter.

There are several *sthōthrā* and assorted songs in Tamil which are full of meaning and also very moving but the authorship of

which is not known. Names for archana can be taken from these also. We can take names from the works of poets who were also great devotees. What is important is that the books from which we should select must be time-tested and having life in them through ages.

It is only if the books already available are not adequate we can evolve new names. But these should be the translation of *Sanskrit Nāmāvalis*. That alone is the respect we will be showing to our ancient tradition.

We are all small people. How can there be life in the words we evolve with our small buddhi? That is why, as the saying goes, 'old is gold', we should fall back on the golden words of the past.

It may not be possible to compile *Nāmāvalis* of important deities like *Mahādēva*, *Dakshināmūrthi*, Navagrahas etc from Tamil texts. In such cases we should use translation of the Sanskrit *Nāmāvalis*.

Those who plead for Tamil archana say that the important reason for their plea is that the language must be understood by the people. Although this problem is the outcome of language rivalry when they give reason they say that the language of archana should be understood by people. Really speaking many of the names in the Sanskrit *Nāmāvali* will be understood by people. If mere poets and scholars who do not move with people and do not understand their attitude with sympathy prepare *Nāmāvali* much of it will be intelligible only to those poets. The devotees who are not concerned with language disputes and are concerned only with the meaning may be led to think 'Sanskrit archana is better than this'.

Therefore this should be entrusted only to poets and scholars who can understand the state of mind of the people and can go along with them. The job of translation should be entrusted

to those who are qualified both in Sanskrit and Tamil. This is a job which should be done with a broad outlook keeping in mind that the words should have life in them and at the same time can be understood by people.

Worship is the very support of people's life. In this if affinity or aversion to language which are unrelated to worship are introduced the Lord will not pardon us. This should not be forgotten. We have to pray to that *Īśvarā* to give the good sense to those who are concerned with this matter.

The only remedy for all our ills is to do *namaskāram* to *Nārāyaṇa* who is the father to all of us who have different views.

* * *

VALOUR AND OBEISANCE

People speak of body language. Instead of expressing a view through word of mouth it is communicated by gesture and that is body language. Similarly *namaskāram* is the physical act to communicate the mental feelings of respect. This body language is more clearly seen when *Panchāṅga namaskāram* is done. Even when doing *Sāshtāṅga namaskāram* the body has to be bent first.

The act of doing *namaskāram* is called 'bowing' in English. A bow is bent in shape. Instead of being stiff, as a sign of being pliable the body is bent and obeisance done.

'Namanam' is bending. Grammatically speaking the word '*namaskāram*' is derived from 'namanam'. But philosophically speaking there is a higher meaning. It is a meaning which is related to *Śaraṇāgathi* by which everything is dedicated to God. At the end of a *karmā* it is usual to say 'na mama'. It is also the rule. It means 'not mine'. That is, 'the fruit of this *anushtānam* is not for me but to you only'. In the same manner, *namaskāram* is to indicate 'this body is not mine; I dedicate this to you'. To treat the body as 'na

mama' is 'namah'. When that is expressed through action it is *namaskāram*.

The direct meaning for *namaskāram* by etymological derivation is 'bending'. It means that we have to bend before others. The word 'bowing' also conveys the same meaning. For the whole world it is the same bhāva, action and words. However much we may try to be separate, basically we are one family.

Christians and Muslims kneel down and show respect, when they bend their legs. Bending the knees especially in worship is called genuflexion. This practice is not absent among us also.

Muslims do 'salam' and Christians do 'salute'. Both the words begin with 'sal'. It is happy to note this kind of unity among different sections of our people. In our Mutt, there is the practice of doing *namaskāram* every day in the evening to the 'Pādukās' of Āchāryā and the Mutt's accounts of the day are placed before him. It is called *Dīpa Namaskāram*. It signifies the special place enjoyed by 'namaskāram'. At that time the elephant of the Mutt will fan the Pādukās, do *namaskāram* by lifting its trunk, make a noise and go away. This 'Dīpa *namaskāram*' is called 'Torch light salam' in common parlance.

Although in other countries the practice of saluting by one hand is prevalent our *sāsthās* do not permit it. '*Ēkahastha prañāmascha hanthi puṇyam purāthanam*' - that is 'doing salutation by one hand will destroy all the *puṇyas* that have been earned'. This is said in the same *sāsthra* which says that if *namaskāram* is done in the prescribed manner even a sinner will earn *puṇya*.

In our country too salute has been made compulsory on certain occasions. This cannot be objected to. If, on those occasions, someone protests and says that he will not salute but do it in a different manner then that is not respect. But when so doing

(saluting) what the *sāsthṛās* say can be kept in mind and pardon can be sought mentally.

The position of the military and the police is different. There the object is to give, out of devotion to the country, even one's life in protecting the country and striving to maintain law and order. Although this object will be as a mental attitude, only if there is provision for those working in these departments to reflect their attitude (*bhāva*) in action they will be helped to develop the dedication to their goal. Keeping the body erect is the body language for showing courage. During guard of honour etc it will be necessary to stand stiff and erect. Even so it will be preferable to find out if there is any way of replacing salute by single hand by something else which combines the sign of valour and respect. If we examine how our warriors in history had acted we can adopt it. But what should be remembered is that to show the *bhāva* of valour stiff and erect position of the body is necessary. Since this is intended for the good of the country we have to accept it.

Since the external make-up (dress) also helps in this we have given dress similar to the police to the watchmen of our Mutt. Nothing should be done to harm the objective in the name of our history, *swadeshi* etc.

It appears that people of other religions too have adopted salute as a symbol of showing respect. Whether it is doing 'salam' or 'salute' it is only bending the right hand in different ways. When Muslims do salam they bend their heads and body to some extent. But it is not so in salute. The practice of the Christians is to kneel before the altar and those entitled to great respect but to others at a lower level it is only salute. Those in the military and the police not only do not bend their body when saluting but stand stiff and erect. With a call to 'attention' when they walk with the boots making a loud noise and salute one will wonder whether it is showing respect or authority. But there is no doubt that it is

respect. Since our brave people who have to protect the country even at the cost of their lives should not become lax in showing valour and bravery it has been laid down that even when they show respect they have to do it in a manner that shows valour also.

On the whole all actions of *namaskāram* - whether it is *Ashtangam* or *Panchāngam* or Salute or Salam - basically show the noble attitude namely obeisance.

* * *

OBEDIENCE; ŚUŚRUSHA

Here also we notice something that shows the unity of the people all over the world. Obedience is derived from the word 'obey'. It is said that this word (obedience) which has come from Latin means in the original 'listening with attention'. We talk of 'śuśrusha'. We say that a *śishya*'s highest duty is to do *śuśrusha* to the guru. For that too the direct meaning is 'listening'.

Thus the words 'obedience' and 'śuśrusha' have the same meaning that is 'listening'. Obeying and rendering service supplement each other. Both have the same meaning in two different languages. This is because : 'Listening' means that we should do according to what we listen, what we hear. Real obedience and *śuśrusha* is to follow the words of elders. *Bhagawān* speaks about the *śishya* doing *namaskāram* to the guru first, then receiving upadesam by repeated questioning and then *śuśrusha* that is doing service.

'Thadh viddhi pranīpāthēna pariprasnēna sēvayā'

(Gita IV.32)

* * *

PRANĪPĀTHAM (PRANĀMAM)

Pranīpatham splits into 'Pra' - 'nī' - 'pātham'. ('n' which follows 'r' will become 'ñ'). That is how *Pranipātham* becomes

Prañipātham. 'Pātham' means 'falling down'. Ni-pātham means falling in one go. It is to give emphasis to the act of falling the prefix 'ni' is added. Thinking that even that emphasis is not adequate *Bhagawān* has added another prefix 'Pra'. He has used the words like this only to convey that the body should be just made to fall flat as a sign of cutting and throwing away the ego 'I'. He has laid down this Prañipātham (*namaskāram*) as the first thing that the sishya has to do on seeing the guru.

There is also the word 'Pra' - 'Nāmam' like *Pra-nipātham*. That is actually *Prañāmam*. In the North, *namaskāram* is more often referred to like this.

In the word 'Pranāmam', 'Nāmam' is the distorted form of 'Namanam' and I have said it is the direct word for *Varākkam*. I like to tell something more in good humour. There is an action which emphasizes *namaskāram*. That is called 'abhivāadhanam'. Starting with the word 'abhivādhayē' we introduce ourselves giving details of our lineage etc. When doing this, the name, *gōthra* and *sūthra* must be mentioned. From what I have said now is it not clear that we have to do *namaskāram* first and then only the name is to be announced? It is on this basis I found a meaning for 'Prañām' in a lighter vein.

The prefix 'Pra' has many meanings. It provides emphasis to the word that follows and indicates its greatness. It also means 'before', 'old time' etc. *Pranāmam* is a more glorified form of 'nāmam'. Since *namaskāram* is done 'before' 'a great person' it is 'Pranāmam'. These are the correct meanings.

The meaning I thought of in a lighter vein is : *Namaskāram* is done before a person announces his name. To say 'before' we can use the word 'pra'. Therefore the action that comes 'before' (pra) the name (namam) is pranāmam that is prañāmam!

* * *

ABHIVĀDHANAM

Abhivāadhanam is an announcement made by the person who does *namaskāram* to the one before whom *namaskāram* is done. Announcing one's name, clan, tradition etc is *Abhivāadhanam*. Manu says that when one who is older in age happens to come before another person, the latter's life will tend to go out. At that time by standing up, reaching to him with respect and doing Abhivāadhanam the life enters back into him and stabilizes:

Ūrdhvam prānāḥ hyukthkrāmanthi yūnah sthavira āyathi
Prathyuththānā (a)bhivādhābhyām punasthān prathipadhyathē

What is referred to here is an elder person coming when one who is younger in age is sitting or lying down. All *sāsthrās* including Manu have said that whenever an older person is seen *namaskāram* should be done with abhivāadhanam.

Namaskāram should be done first. Then we should stand up, bend, touch the two ears by the two hands, left ear by the left hand and the right ear by the right hand, introduce ourselves as laid down in *sāsthrās*. The reason why the ears are to be touched is that they only attract the sound (śabdham) which is connected to *ākāśa* which is the greatest of the five elements.

After completing the abhivāadhanam the hands are to be taken off the ears and the part of the legs from the knee to the toes to be touched. Bending is a sign of humility, submission. When the person does not stand erect even after getting up from the ground and bends it, it indicates humility. Taking the hands off the ears and touching the legs from the knees to the toes is symbolic of offering ourselves, dedicating to the person to whom *namaskāram* is done. Since the ears are part of the head, touching from the ear to the feet is symbolic of dedicating oneself fully to the other person.

Apart from these reasons it must be understood that the action of *namaskāram* itself is a *yōgā* exercise, which purifies the mind by the vibration of several 'nadis'. Touching the ears and then touching from the knee to the toe are useful in helping to cleanse the mind. Finally the feet of the person to whom *namaskāram* is done are to be touched.

Logical reply cannot be given if a question is asked why the feet are to be touched. Touching is a natural expression of bhakthi and humility.

In that gesture our bhakthi to the person to whom *namaskāram* is done and our humility are reflected. Feeling that we are small and the other person is big and is representative of *Īśwarā*, the feet are touched to draw the power of '*Āśīrvād*' from him. It is a kind of 'electrical circuit' touching the *āthmā*. In the Southern parts of the country people do not actually touch the other person's feet but take the hand near the feet and make a gesture of touching. There is justification for this also. It is not proper for those who are younger in age or who are ritually impure to touch the other person who is older in age or ritually pure. There is also the likelihood of our own physical impurities affecting the other person. It is possible that even our mental impurities may affect him. Even men of science speak today about the possibility of this happening like electric current being conducted. More than all these if the person to whom *namaskāram* is done is a noble person with a compassionate heart, if we touch his feet our own sinful *karmās* are likely to 'pass into him' and he may have to take the burden of our suffering to some extent.

If the other person is highly spiritual because of his fire of jnana (jnana agni), '*thapō sakthi*' (power of penance), *yōga sakthi*, the greatness of his bhakthi etc the *karmās* that pass from the other person will get reduced to ashes. But such persons are rare.

When we do not know the inner spiritual power of others we cannot make an assessment about whose feet we can touch. Therefore it is enough if a gesture of touching the feet is made for all persons. That only is practical.

If one is overwhelmed by bhakthi and touches the other person's feet and even embraces him that is a different matter. That surge of bhakthi itself will remedy all blemish (dōsham). But such a surge of bhakthi is also rare for us. A sudden emotion should not be considered to be true bhakthi. Therefore not touching the feet is good for both.

We do *namaskāram* to another person thinking that by his 'āsīrvād' we get 'śrēyas'. When he does good to us is it not wrong to pass on to him what is bad in us? It is all right if this is done unknowingly. But now that I have told you it should not be done. However great a person may be and capable of destroying the *karmās* of others, *namaskāram* by touching the feet should not be done to those who preside over 'dharma pītas' and mutts who are to follow the *sāsthrās* and preach it to others. Although ritual impurities will not affect such great men touching their feet will be harmful to their following the *sāsthrās* and showing it to the world by their example. So it is enough if a gesture of touching is made, taking the hand towards the feet of the other person. If the *bhāva* is pure it has greater power than the actual act. That is why *Īswarā* himself is called '*Bhāvagrāhi*' and not '*Bhāhyagrāhi*'. *Bhāhyagrahi* is one who accepts what is done externally. *Bhāvagrāhi* means one who accepts the mental *bhāva*.

We have brought 'bhāva' to the level of pretence. I do not refer to such *bhāva*. *Bhāva* must be the reflection of the true feeling that we are not able to do a thing. It should be symbolic of true bhakthi and humility.

It does not matter if he does '*āsīrvādam*' or not. Even the thought of doing *āsīrvādam* may not be in his mind. But due to our

namaskāram which is true and is done with pure *bhāvana* his anthahkarana, *Īśwarā-Nārāyaṇa* - will do *āsīrvādam*. There is no doubt about that.

Just as we touch the right ear by the right hand and the left ear by the left hand during *abhivāadhanam* when the hands are taken down towards the feet as a gesture of touching them, the right hand should go near the right foot and the left hand near the left foot. For this we have to keep the hands crossed. Usually we do not do like this. We take the hands down in the normal position with the result that the left hand will be near the right foot and the right hand near the left foot of the other person. We should keep the hands like scissors. The *sāsthrās* say that it should be done like this - 'savyēna savyah samprashtavyō dakṣiṇēna cha dakṣinah'. In one book even the word '*kartharimivava*' - like scissors - is used.

I shall now explain what is said during *abhivāadhanam*. In *abhivāadhanam* what comes are the names of original rishis who had started the *gōthra*. This is called 'Pravaram'. Rishi is one who had drawn some new mantra from *ākāśa* and given to the world. Thus in each *gōthra* there have been one to five rishis. The *gōthra* will have the name of the most important of them. For example, *Āngīrisa gōthram* is the name of *Āngīrasa* rishi who was the originator of that *gōthra*. *Kaundinya gōthra* is named after *Kaundinya* rishi who was the third of the first three. There are some exceptions to these two.

In the *gōthras* mentioned in *pravaram* the names of three rishis occur mostly. Whichever rishi after whom a *gōthra* is named, his lineage will be the first rishi, then his son who was rishi, then his son who was a rishi and so on. But in doing 'Pithru tharpanam', contrary to this, we mention the names of three persons before us in our lineage and offer *tharpaṇam*. In that too we start with the father and go back to his father etc.

It is the practice to repeat the pravaram during marriage. The reason why this is said loudly is that those assembled should know that the marriage is taking place between the boy and girl who belong to different *gōthras* according to rules laid down in the *sāsthrās*. At that time what is said during abhivāadhanam and during tharpanam are combined. First the *gōthra* is announced starting from the first rishi, then his son and then his grand son. Then the names of those in the lineage of the father. But here as different from what we say in tharpanam, we start with the great grandfather, then the grandfather and then the father. In doing tharpanam each name is repeated along with his *gōthra*.

The point here is that in abhivāadhanam the name of the original rishi is said first. Then the name of the *gōthra* is mentioned. Then the name of the *Sūthra* (which codifies the *karmās* to be performed) to which he belongs, then the name of the *Vēdhā* which is his. He is required to do adhyayana in that *Vēdhā sākā*. Finally, the name is announced. After repeating the name, the person to whom *namaskāram* is being done is addressed as 'bhōh' (great man, sire) and *namaskāram* is offered to him. The meaning of the entire statement will be 'Sir, I am so and so whose *gōthra* is that of such and such rishi, whose *sūthra* is such and such and who does adhyayana of such and such *Vēdhā sākā*'.

The more we keep reminding ourselves in what great lineage we have come, to which *Vēdhā* and *Sūthra* we belong, the more it will be for our well being. Repeating the abhivāadhanam is a reminder of our glorious ancestry and that we should be worthy descendents of that lineage and will act as an inspiration, that is it will be a power which will enter into us and activate us. That is why it is prescribed that even when we do *namaskāram* to our fathers and paternal uncles who know the *gōthra* etc we should repeat the prescribed version of *abhivāadhanam*. The basic import of this is

that the *Vēdhās*, the memory of the *Vēdhic* rishis, the greatness of our lineage - greatness of the clan - should always be in our mind.

The format for *abhivāadhanam* is laid down in such a manner that we first state our lineage and then our name. The announcement begins with '*abhivādhayē*' - 'I am introducing myself' is the direct meaning. It is also the practice to give it the extended meaning 'I seek your *āsīrvādham*'.

That *āsīrvādham* (also called *Prathivachanam*) is called *Prathyabhivāadhanam*. It is even said that *namaskāram* should not be performed to one who does not know to say the *Prathyabhivāadhanam*. *Prathyabhivāadhanam* is calling the person (who performs *namaskāram*), by *sarman* followed by the name and saying '*Dīrgāyushmān bhāva sowmya*'.

Just as it is said that *namaskāram* should not be done to one who does not know to say the *Prathyabhivāadhanam* it is also laid down that *namaskāram* should not be done to some others also - when a person is lying down, even if he is great and knowledgeable, when one is doing *japa* or *pūjā* or doing *homam* or when he has applied oil on his head and is waiting to have bath, when he is having in his hand a vessel containing water, '*pushpa akshatha*', *samidh*, *ghee* etc.

There is also a rule in our *Dharma sāsthrās* that in the case of some even if we do *namaskāram* we should not say *abhivāadhanam*. *Abhivāadhanam* is not to be repeated to *yathis* (*sanyāsis*). Before mentioning *yathis* four or five others are also mentioned :

Dēvān, nadhīm, sabhām, vruksham, agnīnapi thathā yathīn
Daṇḍavath praṇameth bhūmow n(ā)bhivāadhanam ācharēth

To all those mentioned here one should only do *namaskāram* by falling before them flat like a staff but *abhivāadhanam* should not be done - the *Dēvās* (that is why *abhivāadhanam* is not done when

doing *namaskāram* in temple and in the puja room in our homes) the rivers - we do *Gangā pūjā* and *Samudra pūjā* in *Rāmēswaram* - there is no *abhivāadhanam* in these. If there is an assembly of great persons there is only *namaskāram* to the sabha and no *abhivāadhanam*. It is so even for the trees like 'asvaththa' and the fire.

I now say something with caution. Among the women there is *abhivāadhanam* only to the mother and not for any other woman. If I had said this in the beginning modern day ladies who talk of equality will become angry. Therefore I have carefully said that there is no *abhivāadhanam* even for *Dēvās*, *sanyāsis*, holy waters and assembly of the learned etc. Therefore it is not based on difference in status. Such a rule is there for some reason which cannot be disclosed to us. Although *namaskāram* can be done to all ladies who are higher in status, *abhivāadhanam* with *namaskāram* is only done to the mother. Great men have been following this practice. It is also part of the tradition that the status of mother is given to the guru pathni and to the elder brother's wife after the death of the mother.

It is also laid down that *namaskāram* should not be done to one who is at higher level or at a lower level. This rule is applicable to all except the guru. When we have the title of the guru we have to receive more *namaskāram* than others and suffer for it!

It is also laid down how the one who does *namaskāram* should not be. He should not do *namaskāram* keeping in his hands the things that were earlier mentioned regarding the one who receives *namaskāram*. In the case of men, they should not have upper garment. It has to be tied around the waist and *namaskāram* done. What is important is that the body should not be covered. It is symbolic of not covering the part that contains the heart and doing the act without hiding anything. Therefore he should not have the shirt on. Both of them should not be impure. In these days

we can interpret it liberally to mean that they should not suffer from too much ritual pollution.

If one is great in vidhyō or anushtōnam or jñōnam even if he is of the same age or younger namaskōram should be done to him. In the case of others there is a view that the other person should be at least three years older. But instead of sticking to this rule it would be good to do *namaskāram* to all persons who are older than us in age starting from those who are only marginally older than us; it helps developing the culture of humility.

* * *

BEFORE AND AFTER THE NAME OF GOD:

I said earlier more in lighter vein that what one does before he announces his name is *Pranāmam* - *Prāṇāmam*. Even before the names of *Paramaśiva* and *Mahāvishṇu* to whom all people do *namaskāram* there is our *namaskāram* before their names. Where are they?

They are in their manthras - *Panchāksharī* and *Ashtāksharī*. In *Śiva Panchāksharī* it is 'namah' in the beginning and then 'Śivāya' which is *Īśwarā*'s name. In *Nārāyaṇa Ashtāksharī* it is first 'Namō' and then 'Nārāyaṇāya', the name of *Vishṇu*. Although we (*sanyāsis*) dedicate the *namaskāram* to *Nārāyaṇa*, *Paramēśwarā* also is fond of *namaskāram*. Usually, *Śiva* is said to be '*Abhishēka Priya*'. *Mahāvishṇu* is said to be '*Alankāra Priya*'. *Śiva* will be bathing all the time. *Mahāvishṇu*, since he rules the world as the great king, he adorns himself with *krītam*, *kuṇḍalam*, fine cloth etc. I was saying that *Īśwarā* also is fond of *namaskāram*. In *Srī Rudram* which is a popular part of *Vēdhās* which is a *sthōthrā* to him there is plenty of 'Namō Namah'. It has another name 'Namakam'.

* * *

NO ABHIVĀDHANAM TO A SANYĀSI

We were on the subject of abhivāadhanam. The reason why I talked about this is that in case people think that they have to do *namaskāram* to us followed by abhivāadhanam it is not so. I have said earlier that *sāsthrās* do not permit it. I will elaborate on this.

I had also said that a *sanyāsi* is a '*Nirnamaskāran*' and '*Nirāśīrvāadhan*'. *Namaskāram* to him has been allowed more by way of respecting the sentiments of the people. This rule regarding abhivāadhanam not to be done for *sanyāsi* has been laid down because he has to remain only in the thought of *Āthmā* and not be concerned with who does *namaskāram* to him. He has to be totally unconcerned.

Since we who are having the status of a '*guru Pītam*' also are *sanyāsis* the rule regarding abhivāadhanam not to be done is enforced in our case also.

Sometimes some persons not knowing this rule start saying '*abhivādhayē*' after doing *namaskāram*. Immediately those who are around will shout 'No, No' don't do that. I used to feel like laughing because the *sāsthrās* have made the rule that good things that are part of the *abhivāadhanam* - like the names of rishis, names of *gōthras*, *suthras*, *Vedhas* etc are not necessary for *sanyāsi*. Since violating the rule is sin we are enforcing it here also. But what I do is instead of knowing the good things that are part of the *abhivāadhanam* I make enquiries about all that pertains to the person who does *namaskāram* - instead of listening to the '*Rishi Pravaram*' I ask him about his uncle, grandfather, neighbours, his officer, the job he did long back, where all he had worked etc. Not bothering to know about his relationship to the Rishi and *Vedhas* I mention to him the name of some person and tell him in a round about way how that person is related to him and have it confirmed by him. By this I also earn a name for '*Jnāna dhruṣhti*', great memory and all that. The details of abhivāadhanam like *gōthram*,

sūthram etc which I do not get from him in a formal manner I do get informally.

What can we do? If *sishtyas* are to have affinity to the Mutt and by that receive the protection of dharma that the Mutt gives, give to the mutt financial protection and thus the two are to prosper by mutual help the person who heads the mutt as the Swāmi has to show interest in their matters and move with them with affection. If the Matādhipathi is unconcerned how can the *sishtyas* have attachment to the mutt? They too will become unconcerned and move away from the mutt.

Because of what is said it should not be thought that making enquiries of the *sishtyas* is only with a purpose in mind. The object of the Matādhipathi is to teach dharma to the people. If he has genuine interest in it he will develop interest in the *sishtyas* and have consideration and affection for them naturally. What I say is that the feeling will be natural without being linked to any purpose.

* * *

DOING ANJALI; SHAKING HANDS

I have referred to different forms of showing respect. I have to mention one more form which is important, which is followed all over India and even foreigners coming here do it. It is the sign not only of expression of respect but good wishes even to those who do not have the status to be shown respect. I am referring to doing 'anjali' by bringing the two forms together. In fact anjali which is done to the Lord in temples is becoming popular as a sign of expression of good wishes. Even now one who sees another person who is higher than him by age or status does anjali to him and the other person then returns the anjali. In the North it is the practice to say '*Namasthē*' even when doing anjali. Here in Tamil Nadu the practice of following the anjali with '*Vaṇakkam*' is more prevalent.

Young people do not appear to greet each other by doing anjali. They do anjali only to those who are older than them. Starting from the middle age and above even persons of the same age do anjali to each other.

What the Westerners do is different from this. They shake hands with each other irrespective of age. This is the goodwill gesture, common courtesy. Even where respect is to be shown, after kneeling down, doing salute etc they shake hands. If the two are of the same status or lower status they shake hands first then embrace each other and kiss.

In our country embracing and kissing are not in vogue. But embracing is in practice in the North. The '*sadhāchāram*' followed in the South has not allowed this. We learn from ancient literature that when all people maintained ritual purity people of the same sex used to embrace each other. We also find that friends often embrace each other. In this we find that one who is older keeps the younger one on his lap etc.

The practice of kissing has never been there among us. Our *āchārā* and culture do not give room for it.

Even if the practice of shaking hands is not there holding each other's hand is prevalent. It is also usual to stretch out both the hands, hold the other person's hands and welcome him. In *Rāmāyaṇā* when *Sri Ramachandramurthi* entered into friendship with *Sugrīva*, *Surgriva* says :

Rōchathe yadhi vā sakhyam bhāhurēsha prasārithah
Gruhyathām Pāninā pānihi maryādha bhadhyathām dhruvā

'If you wish to have friendship with me, here are my outstretched hands. You hold them with your hands. By that the agreement between us will be firmly protected'.

Hand is the important instrument for doing things. Knowledgeable people say that both in the Western and Eastern countries the practice of holding each others hand has developed in order to signify that one is prepared to do to the other person all that is possible and also show that he does not hide anything in his hand which can cause hurt to the other person. When we say that one is the 'right hand' of some one it conveys the same idea.

Doing *namaskāram* by touching the other person's feet is not so much in vogue in the South as it is in the North. Similarly, embracing each other is also not in vogue in the South whereas it is still the practice in the North. The reason : As the age of Kali advances, impurity goes on increasing both in people's mind and in the external world. When this is happening if body contact takes place between two persons the blemish (*dhōsham*) of the one who is less pure will affect the other person. It is only in the case of those who are very pure their own purity can remove the impurity of the other person. A single person suffering from a communicable disease is able to spoil the health of many who are healthy but any number of healthy persons cannot pass on their good health to that person. If there is a single rotten fruit in the basket it makes the entire lot rotten. In the same manner the touch of one person of bad *āchārā* spoils the *Sadhāchāram* of the other person. The Brahmins of the South who had found this out decided to protect their personal purity - which is a kind of personal hygiene - and discarded the practice of touching and embracing each other. Although there is no body contact the love is not less. The radiation that goes out from a person has greater value than touch. It is like this : If water is dropped on fire the fire gets extinguished. But when we keep a vessel containing water over the oven the water and the fire are not in direct contact with each other but the heat of the fire is passed on to the water.

Generally, all people accepted it and followed the *āchārā* observed by the Brahmins. Therefore in the South generally body contact during meet has gone out of practice.

It may be asked why only the Brahmins of the Southern part should do like this and not the Brahmins in the North. This is because: Since right from Alexander's time it is only in the North the foreigners came one after the other and settled down. Therefore foreign influence is more there in the form of dress etc. All the foreigners belonged to the culture of touching and embracing.

It may be their culture. But for us who have the responsibility for protecting the manthras etc it will not be *āchāram*. This should not be misunderstood. This type of *āchāram* follows the same principle of isolating people - from the hospital to the astronaut - applied to the *Āthmā*.

There is exception in the case of persons who have great *sakthi* and when there is a surge of love or grace.

Even Westerners who have gone deep into the practice of *dhyāna*, *yōgā* etc say that body contact is not so good and is not necessary either and that it results in the bad affecting the good instead of the good influencing the bad. Psychologists too say that embracing etc are something like acting under animal impulse.

* * *

WHEN HOLDING HANDS BECOMES HOLY

Our religion has the extraordinary greatness of giving us *Vēdhic* rituals (*Vaidhika samskāṛās*) by which even the union of the male and the female is made pure through the power of manthras. In line with this, there are two great *samskāṛās* which purify the holding of hands tightly. One is *Pāṇigrahaṇam* which occupies an important part in the marriage *samskāṛā*. The other

one is upanayanam. *Pāṇigrahaṇam* is part of upanayanam also. But somehow *Pāṇigrahaṇam* in upanayanam is not seen to be as important as one in the marriage. Forgetting that the purpose of marriage is to have a companion to perform the swadharma and observe the *anushtānās* according to the *Vēdhās* people seem to think that the purpose is only enjoyment as husband and wife - somehow they think that once the marriage is over they have really achieved its objective and therefore they seem to be remembering the *Pāṇigrahaṇam* in the context of marriage. The wrong notion that there is the sentiment of love in *Pāṇigrahaṇam* (*srungāra rasa*) may also be the reason.

These days people have no thought whatever about observing the dharma meant for a *brahmachāri* which is the object of upanayanam, of living with the *āchāryā*, serving him and learning from him the *Vēdhā vidhyā* or living by seeking *biksha* etc they have no concern for the various aspects of the upanayana *samskāram*. The *āchāryā* who conducts the upanayanam and who is to keep the boy in his *gurukulam* has to hold the boy's hand during upanayanam just as the bridegroom holds the hand of the bride during marriage. He recites the manthra which says that several *dēvathās* are inside him and they hold the boy's hand through him and protect him. In marriage the bridegroom says that several *dēvathās* have given the bride to him and offers prayers to the *dēvathās* to bless him and the bride so that they will be able to follow the dharma of the householder (*gruhastha dharma*). Both in marriage and upanayanam the underlying idea and object are the same in doing *Pāṇigrahaṇam* - that is, *Paramēśwarā* himself has given the *jīvās* the dharma applicable to each stage (*āśrama*) through the *dēvathās* who are his officers. If they follow them with *bhakti* the *dēvathās* will lend a helping hand in protecting dharma and through that lead him to the spiritual goal, conducting him by holding his hand.

These aspects are proof that marriage to a girl is like upanayanam for a boy. *Śāsthrās* are of the view that just as the boy surrenders to a guru and goes on the path leading to his goal holding the guru's hands a girl has to do to the husband who is like guru.

In both the instances the two do not hold each other's hands as a handshake. It is the *āchāryā* who does the upanayanam who holds the boy's hand closing it tight. Similarly it is the bridegroom who holds the bride's hand closing it tight. In handshake there is equality and therefore each hold the hand of the other. But in upanayana and marriage it is surrender (*sarañagathi*); the boy in upanayanam and the girl in marriage are as *śishya*, remain in a lower status with humility, surrender and feel that they have nothing to do. As a sign of entrusting the mind, speech and body to the *āchāryā* they extend to him the hand which is the instrument for all actions and remain quiet. As a sign of approving the surrender of the *śishya* and protecting him the *āchāryā* alone holds the *śishya*'s hand.

* * *

HOLDING THE HAND AND 'DHAṆDAM'

The *āchāryā* cannot keep holding the *śishya*'s hand all the time. Therefore he hands over to him a '*dhaṇḍam*' (staff) as his representative. *Āchāryā* is important for controlling the mind, observing brahmacharyam etc. The staff symbolizes that. It also gives the power to retain the vidhya and manthras that have been learnt. The staff for a *brahmachāri* and a *sanyāsi* are of different kinds of trees, meant to protect the important thing pertaining to the respective '*āśram*'.

It may be asked why no staff is given to the wife. It is here that the greatness of '*Pāthivriṭhyam*' lies. A girl has the natural

quality to surrender to her husband. She is naturally submissive. There is therefore no need to give her any external symbol.

* * *

CULTURE THAT DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Whatever has been said here about two persons touching or embracing each other is only between persons of the same sex. Our culture cannot even think in any other way. Only during marriage the holding of hand is in public view but it does not give room for improper thoughts and it is *Pānigrahaṇam* which is a *karmā* according to *sāsthrās*. It is not so in the case of Westerners. It is possible that in *Īśwarā*'s creation those who live there are more worldly and probably they have to find progress in that and therefore they do things to suit that. But it is seen that from time immemorial it has been the will of *Īśwarā* that people of Bhārat have to experience on the basis of truth related to *āthmā*. It may be said that for others worldly science is like the main meal and spirituality is like a little side dish. But for us spirituality is like the main meal and science is a little side dish. Since we are not qualified to comment on the Lord's *līlā* of creation we need not find fault with that. But we need not also think, as it happens now, less of our own culture and take to their way of life. What is a matter for great regret is that it appears in our country too the restraints of sex are being violated and people behave like those of the West.

Now in our country women are occupying high posts, including in the police. In this situation if foreigners come as visitors for the women officers to shake hands with them is causing serious hurt to our culture. May be that their hearts are pure when doing this. Even so it is not a satisfying argument. If the foreigners are told that in the culture of our country there is no practice of

holding the hand of anyone other than the husband they will respect their sentiments.

Garlanding is also similar to the handshake. Men have to garland men and women have to garland women. There is one other practice which, though not as bad as the other, is not auspicious. I refer to the practice of putting a shawl around the neck of a woman. This can be done only for men. For women it has to be handed over to them on a plate with betel leaves etc.

* * *

TYPES OF ANJALI

When we bring together the palms and do anjali it signifies collecting the mind which tries to get detached and offer it. It is like the lotus bud which has not flowered. The heart itself is like a lotus bud. Therefore the anjali is symbolic of showing love wholeheartedly. It is a beautiful symbol born out of beautiful thought. We do '*pushpānjali*' by taking flowers in the hand and offering them to the Lord with the '*anjali*' *mudhrā* (sign). During night the lotus flower closes itself. While describing *Ambāl Āchāryā* says 'the nails on *Ambāl*'s feet are like white moonlight. The ladies of *Dēvalōkam* keep their hands with folded palms on *Ambāl*'s feet and do *namaskāram*. When we see this it looks as if their hands which are like lotus closed up in the moonlight of *Ambāl*'s nails'.

Nakhair Nāgasthrīnām karakamala sankōcha saśibhihi

(*Soundarya lahari - Ślōka 89*)

Even in doing anjali by bringing the palms together different methods have been prescribed for different persons. What is general and is done to anybody is to do it by bringing the palms just in front of the chest. The heart is located there. There is therefore nothing wrong in doing our *namaskāram* to all persons including *Īswarā* who resides in the lotus of the heart. But when it comes to

showing respect there are different levels starting from *Īśwarā* and down to us, different types of anjali convey different meanings.

When we do anjali to the Lord the hand should be raised above the head and the palms brought together. Here too there is a differentiation. When doing anjali to '*Ishta Dēvathā*' the hands should be raised above the head in a manner that the closed palms do not touch the top of head. But for other deities they should touch the top of the head. The guru's place is the '*Ājnā Chakra*' which is located between the two eyebrows. Is not guru the one who gives command? Therefore the anjali to the guru should be done by keeping the folded palms between the eyebrows.

To the father it should be kept before the mouth and to the mother before the stomach. To the king also it should be before the mouth. To the father it is before the mouth probably because he is the one who feeds us till we are on our own and also makes arrangement for our studies. As for the king it is probably because he has the ultimate responsibility for our living. About the mother it is because she carried us in her womb as a great sacrifice.

For all others the anjali is before the chest. I said we can do in this manner to all including God. If it is for God the fingers of the closed palm should be turned towards the chest as a symbol that it goes to the Lord who is inside. For others the fingers should be facing them. There are so many subtle and inner meanings in what we consider as a small *namaskāram*.

* * *

PRADHAKSHINAM

There is a higher state in which one does not do prayer or puja but all the time he is thinking (doing *smaraṇam*) of the Lord and just keeps doing the daily routine more as a formality or for previous *karmā* (*pūrvā karmā*). In that state the *Antharāthmā* will

see every action as an aspect of *pūjā*. *Āchāryā* has prayed to *Īśwarā* and *Ambāl* that he should attain that stage. In two *ślōkas* he says which are the daily activities and what aspect of *pūjā* they should become. When praying to *Īśwarā* he says : *Āthmāthvam girijā mathih sahacharāh prānāh sarīram gruham* - he refers to *Āthmā*, mind, life (prana) and *sarīram* and then says *Īśwarā* is *Āthmā*, *Ambāl* is mind, *Īśwarā*'s '*gaṇās*' are the five kinds of *prānā* and his abode is the body and then he enumerates the acts indicating which act is what aspect of *pūjā*.

Āthmāthvam girijā mathih sahacharāh prānāh sarīram gruham
Pūjā the vishayōpa bhōga rachanā nidrā samādisthithih
Sanchāraha padhayōh pradakshiṇa vidhih

* * *

THE MAHĀSWĀMI CONTINUES

Sanchāraha padhayōh pradakshiṇa
vidhih sthōthrāṇi sarvāgīrah
Yadhyath karma karōmi thathadhakīlam
sambhōh thavā(a)rādhānam

What concerns us here is '*Sanchāraha padhayōh pradakshina vidhih*'. He says that whenever we go walking it should be the *pradakshiṇam* we do to the Lord. *Āchāryā* says that *pradakshiṇam* is an important aspect of *pūjā*.

In Soundarya Lahari when *Āchāryā* talks about *Ambāl* he refers to each daily action as a part of *pūjā*:

Japō jalpahah śīlpam sakalamapi mudhrā Virachanā
Gathih prādakshiṇya kramaṇam, asanādhyāhuthi vidhih
Praṇāma samvēśah sukhamakila mātḥmārpariādhruśā
Saparyā paryāya sthava bhavathu yanmē vilasitham

Here *Āchāryā* has referred both to *pradakshiṇam* and *namaskāram*. When he spoke in the context of *Īśwarā* there is no reference to *namaskāram*. Here he has mentioned both.

What was referred to as 'sanchāram' is mentioned as 'gathi' here. We should have the awareness that all our walk is *pradakshiṇam* to the Lord. 'Samvēśam' means sleeping. Here it means lying down for sleeping. He says 'When I lie down like that let it be my *namaskāram* to you'. When we do *sāshtānga namaskāram* and also when we lie down to sleep we are flat and quiet.

But there is a lot of difference in the quiet that prevails in both the states. When we become tired we lie down to sleep. That is natural to the body. But in *namaskāram* we surrender our mind to Her and remain quiet. Since the mind is not active it is the state of quiet in which no thought arises. All of us really sleep but what about real *namaskāram*?

Lying flat keeping the body from head to foot on the floor is common both to *namaskāram* and sleep. When we lie down to sleep we have to be on our back or on our sides. We should not lie down with face down.

Lying down without doing anything is *namaskāram*. Walking is *pradakshiṇam*. Both are to be done thinking about *Bhagawān* only and nothing else. The sequence is *pradakshiṇam* and *namaskāram*. First we have to go round and then do *namaskāram* where we end the *pradakshiṇam*.

The term 'dhakshina' in *pradhakshiṇam* shows the right side. *Pradhakshiṇam* is the circumambulation done around a Murthi or a great person or a holy hill (*Giri Pradhakshiṇam*) in such a manner that they are always to our right.

In Sanskrit the right side is called 'dakshiṇa bhāgam'. If one sits facing east and his body is said to be the temple of *Īśwarā*, the

person's heart is the sanctum sanctorum (*Mūlasthānam*) of *Īśwarā*. In this position it is South which is to his right, to the right of the body. That is the reason, it appears, that the South is called *Dakshina bhāgam*.

The Lord is within this world and all the things of the world. With the awareness that nothing can move without his power we should go around him who pervades all the directions. When we go around him even if the direction in which we move keeps changing he is the unchanging center. We should remind ourselves that he is the center of gravity. That is why the act of doing *pradakshinām* has been laid down.

* * *

MOVEMENT OF THE PLANETS AND OUR PRADHAKSHINAM

There is another reason why we should do *pradakshinām*. This world is rotating and going round all the time. It rotates on its own axis and at the same time keeps moving around the sun.

It is not only the earth but all the planets are in motion. According to astrology there are nine planets excluding the earth but including the Sun and the Moon. But according to astronomy it is nine including the earth but excluding the Sun and Moon. *Rāhu* and *Kēthu* are not included in that calculation. Likewise *Uranus*, *Neptune* and *Pluto* which were later discoveries are not in our nine.

The earth and other planets moving around their own axis is rotation. Each of them moving around the Sun in its own orbit is revolution.

The earth moves on its axis from West to East. We have read that it is due to this rotation that day and night are caused and there is time difference between countries. It is because the earth moves from West to East we get the impression that the Sun and

Moon are moving from East to West. Rotation of the earth and other planets from West to East is the opposite of *pradhakshinām* (*apradhakshinām*). *Śāsthrās* say that we should not do like that. *Pradhakshinām* is clockwise and *apradhakshinām* is anti-clockwise. 'Chalanam' (motion) is the act of *Ambāl*. It is because of the greatness of Her *śakthi* that even the large planets are constantly on the move with great speed. Her position is to the left. (in the *Ardhanārīśwara* form, *Śiva* is in the right and *Ambāl* is in the left). Consistent with that the movement of the planets is also to the left. *Īśwarā* has ordained that all the planets should keep rotating and in the universe which we see the planets should keep moving round the Sun and this has been going on for ages and ages. Will not the same dharma be applicable to us who are in the solar system? That is why our ancestors have laid down that keeping *Īśwarā*, the *Āthma Jyōthis*, as the center we should do *pradakshina*. But if we have to keep as the final goal the peace which is the state of getting released from constant movement we have to do *pradhakshinām* to the right which is symbolic of peace.

It is also laid down that just as the earth rotates on its own axis we too should rotate remaining at one place. In addition to doing *pradakshinām* we should remember at least for a few minutes that the Lord is within us also and we have to rotate around ourselves keeping him as the center.

The hands within a clock do not rotate outside the clock but within it. Its one end is fixed at the center of the dial. That point is 'achalam'. That is fixed. But the other parts of the hand move around that point. Our rotating around ourselves can be likened to this.

The planets do both rotation and revolution as *apradhakshinām*. The law governing the universe is 'apradhakshinām', not moving to the right but to the left. Earlier I said that we do *pradhakshinām* around the deity and also Self

according to dharma governing the universe. But we find there is a big difference between the two. It is true that man has to follow the dharma governing the universe. But it should not end with that. He has to go along with that and rise above that - to go to the true state (State of Sathyam) which is beyond dharma and adharma.

What the *jīvā* does should be different from what the insentient planets do. It is only when he does like that it will take him to the great Consciousness which is only one. That is the pradakshinam done to the Lord (*Mūla vasthu*) by showing the right part all the time. The insentient planets may be moving with force to show the power of *Śakthi*. But for the sentient human beings, although there may be several wonders and beauties reflecting the *Sakthi* he attains fullness (*Pūrṇāthvam*) only in the state of peace in which all the *śakthi* subsides. The Upanishad itself (*Māṇḍūkyaōpanishad*) says '*Sathyam-Śivam-Adhvaitham*'. The side appropriate to that *sānthā Śivam* is the right side. We who have to end up in that *sāntham* will have to go round to the right. The import of pradakshinam can be understood as going round for showing the power of *Śakthi* and combining with it the end which is peace.

If we run in the manner of the universe life will end with the experience of universe. It will not show the way for experience of the Self, (*Āthmānubhavam*). So long as we are in worldly life we should be in conformity to it, discharge the *karmā* and find the way for crossing the worldly life. That is the principle of *pradhakshinam*. It is a principle which shows the similarity and difference between the insentient universe and the sentient *jīvā*.

I had mentioned about 'running as the universe does'. If you look at a running race you will find they will run in *apradhakshinam*. There it is entirely the function of the physical force. There is no connection with the *Āthmā*. That is why man does in the manner of what the planets do. When it is the effort of

the physical body it is the dharma of the universe of matter. If we change this and do differently, our body which is physical will be affected. The steps provided inside temple towers (gōpuram) to go up will also be left winding. Foreigners too wonder at the knowledge of science our ancients had.

* * *

NAMASKĀRAM WHICH FOLLOWS PRADHAKSHINĀM

As soon as *pradhakshinām* is completed *namaskāram* be done by falling flat. This is called 'Pradhakshiṇā *namaskāram*'. There is also a rule about the directions towards which this should be done. In the case of deities facing the East or the West this should be done towards the North. In the case of deities facing the North or the South this should be done towards the East. In other words this should not be done towards the South and the West. Generally even during *namaskāram* to a person (without *pradhakshinām*) it will be done towards North or East.

Another important point : In a temple there will be several sannidhis for several *Mūrthis*. *Namaskāram* should not be done before each of them by falling flat. Only anjali should be done. This is because different Murthis face different directions and if *namaskāram* is done to one *Mūrthi* by falling flat we will be showing our legs towards another *Mūrthi*. Therefore after crossing the flag post (Dwajasthambam) *namaskāram* is to be done in the side to the main deity only. Such a *namaskāram* will also go to other *Mūrthis*. But if within a temple there is a separate sannidhi with a flag staff we can do *namaskāram* there. By and large the sannidhis for Amman called 'Amman koil' are like this (within a temple).

Another important rule is that *pradhakshinām* to be done very slowly. It used to be said that the pace of walking should be so

slow that if a lady who is in the advanced state of pregnancy walks holding in her hand a cup full of oil, the oil should not spill out of the cup. Only then the mind can be concentrated on God. If we walk fast the mind also will function fast and run in different directions.

The important reason is what I said earlier - the peace (*sāntham*) of *Śiva* to be intimately joined with the movement (*chalanam*) of *Śakthi* and completed. *Pradhakshinām* is movement (*chalanam*) and when it is done at a slow pace is it not *sāntham*? I said that because the *jīvā* has to do opposite to the *apradhakshinām* of the insentient planets he has to do *pradhakshinām*. By the same logic since the planets move very fast we should do the *pradhakshinām* very slowly.

* * *

RULES OF ŚĀSTHRĀS WHICH TRANSCEND RATIONALITY

These explanations are only secondary. Our ancestors who have given us the *sāsthrās* had discovered the truth of the spiritual world which we cannot understand or experience and given us as the rules of *sāsthrā* with the great consideration that we too should attain them. If such people have laid down rules such as 'go round, go round yourself, do it to the right, do it slowly' etc it is all for our good. There is no need to go in search of other reasons. It is only because the 'buddhi' does not remain quiet but raises questions we are in search of reasons and explanations. Whatever they have said are all with meaning. If proof be need that it is all for the good of the *jīvās*, the biggest proof is that because people have followed what they have said with faith and bhakthi for generations they have been generally good and have had a peaceful nature to an extent not found in other countries. Among them several were great (*Mahāns*) and were bestowing their grace. We see in practice the bad state in which we are from the time we started questioning.

The sum and substance of the whole thing is that if a physical action which is our outward expression of the mental attitude is done by several people over generations it gains an inner strength. Then this act itself strengthens that attitude and also helps it to grow. Thus the *sāshtānga* and *panchanga namaskāram* are of help in nurturing the attitude of humility which is great wealth.

* * *

THE GREATNESS OF HUMILITY

In our ancient traditions much greatness has been accorded to humility. Although there is scope for developing haughtiness due to status, wealth, knowledge, beauty etc it becomes prominent only when one thinks that 'I am highly knowledgeable'. Such people will be contemptuous of anything and will even indulge in ridicule. Therefore if such knowledge is coupled with humility we will be rid of haughtiness. This is what our *sāsthrās* emphasize repeatedly - learning should be accompanied by cultivation of humility. Otherwise all that is learnt is waste, says the *sāsthrās*. *Bhagawān* also says in Gita : '*Vidhyā vinaya sampanna*'.

Since *Īśwarā*'s grace will flow only to the place where there is humility. All people should desire it and as a help to it do plenty of *namaskāram*. In olden days it used to be said that we have to go in search of great persons and do *namaskāram* to them.

* * *

THOSE ENTITLED TO NAMASKĀRAM : AGE LIMIT

It used to be said that *namaskāram* should be done by falling flat only to someone who is older at least by three years and others should be wished differently. As I have already mentioned I think that in these days when humility is on the decline it will be good to do *namaskāram* to anyone who is older than us without

considering the age limit of three years. Even according to strict *sāsthrā* rules we have to do *namaskāram* even to those who are younger than us in certain situations. For example, if the elder brother's wife is younger in age, we have to do *namaskāram* to her since she has the status of the mother. It is the same with the guru pathni, even if she is younger than us. Generally speaking since the wife of anyone older than us is considered his half and since it is considered good if *namaskāram* is done to a couple we have to do *namaskāram* without considering the age of the ladies. The limit of three years does not apply to those who are learned, those who have had spiritual experience, great bhakthas, *jnānis*, *sanyāsis*, those who occupy the position of *āchāryā* in religious institutions etc. Even if such persons are younger than us we have to do *namaskāram*. The son of the guru is also to be included in this list.

Just as it is good if *namaskāram* is done to a couple those who do *namaskāram* also should do as husband and wife together. If children are with them all the family members should do *namaskāram* together. Family unity has been nurtured like this. The general principle is that the more we fall at the feet of several people, more the sense of ego will keep reducing.

* * *

SINGLE 'NAMAHA' - NOT UTTERED

In Sapthasathī there are several *ślōkas* in which *namaskāram* is offered to *Ambāl* by saying 'Namasthasyai, Namasthasyai, Namasthasyai, Namō Namah'. A single 'Namah' is never uttered. It is the practice to say Namō-Namah. Even during casual talk we say 'thousand *namaskārams*' to you. When writing letters to elders it is begun with 'Anantha kōti *namaskāram*'.

When doing Sāshtāngam or Panchānga *namaskāram* to very great persons it is said in the tradition of 'śīshtās' that it should be

done four times. In one Vaishnava tradition there is the practice that we should keep doing *namaskāram* till the other person says enough. We who have come in such a tradition which has nurtured *namaskāram* should not allow a great heritage to go waste.

It is important that this act is performed with humility and with the desire for more humility. If this basic thought is not there it will be merely a physical exercise. What is the use of just developing the body by doing exercise? *Bhagawān* has shown the way only to the humans to strengthen the mind through great experiences, through '*Āthmānubhavam*'. When that is so if we just develop only the physical strength we will be like animals only. Although the ways *Bhagawān* has given are many the important objective is to reduce the ego by humility. The means for it is to fall at the feet of elders saying '*Namō Namah*', '*Namō Nārāyaṇāya*'.

* * *

WHAT GIVES EVEN FINAL RELEASE

The *Vēdhā* says 'Treat *Paramāthmā* as *namaskāram* and do worship'; then all desire (*kama*) will start doing *namaskāram* to you'. (*Thaithirīya Upanishad 3.10.4*). What is the meaning of this? Generally we do *namaskāram* praying for the fulfillment of several desires. Is it possible that all of them will be fulfilled? Will our *karmā* allow that? Even if it is fulfilled can the *Āthmā* attain a sense of fulfillment? Since there is no limit to desire they will keep rising one after the another. Therefore if we have to pray intelligently we have to pray for the state of release in which all the desires are given up. It is that state which is referred to in the *Vēdhās* as 'the state in which all desires (*kāma*) do *namaskāram* to him'. He does not pray for the fulfillment of any desire. The desires fall at his feet saying 'you have discarded us like this. Please have a look at us'. This is what the *Sruthi* says with poetic finesse.

Manu Smruthi says that for one who daily goes to elders who are worthy and highly qualified, does *namaskāram* and renders service to them four noble things keep accruing - longevity, learning, fame, strength (*Āyus, Vidhyā, Yaśas, Balam*).

*Abhivādhanaśīlasya nithyam vruddhōpa sēvinah
Chathvāri thasya vardhanthē āyur vidhyā yaśō bhalam*

There is also a different version : 'Āyuh Prajnā'. It is 'prajnā' instead of 'vidhyā'. Prajna is knowledge of high level. Vidhyā also has this meaning in addition to 'learning'.

Dharma *Śāsthrās* speak of the fruits of *namaskāram* in various ways : 'The 'srēyas' attained by a person who does *dhañdam* by falling flat cannot be had even by performing 100 *yajnās*; it is not correct even to say that one *namaskāram* is not equal to ten 'Asvamēdha Yajnās'; because the one who has performed ten such *yajnās* has rebirth but *namaskāram* gives release from the cycle of rebirth.

A great person has expressed the view in the form of a prayer to *Paramēśwarā* with poetic flavour that *namaskāram* gives release from birth:

*Vapuh prādhurbhāvāth anumithamidham janmani purā
Purārē! Na kwāpi kvachidhapi bhavantham prañathavān
Namanmukthah samprathyahamathanuh agrēpyanathimān
Īthīśa kshanthavyam thadhidham aparādha dwayamapi
(Appayya Dīkshithar, 'Kuvalayānandham')*

He says 'Paramēśwarā! You must pardon me my two offences. One is that in the previous birth I have not performed *namaskāram* to you. I know this because I have taken this birth. If I had done *namaskāram* to you this birth would not have come. The other offence is that in the next birth I will not be doing *namaskāram* to you. I have dropped my body before you. By this I

have already obtained release from rebirth. When there is no rebirth how can I do *namaskāram* again?’

At the conclusion of Bhāgavatham there is a *śloka* which states as a finality:

Nāma sankīrthanam yasya sarvapāpa prañāśanam
Prañāmō dhukha samanah tham namāmi harim param

The first half begins with ‘*Nāmam*’. The second part begins with ‘*Prañāmam*’. In the middle is ‘*Pra-nāśam*’ (*Pranāśanam*). *Nāmam-Pranāmam-Pranāśam* - beautiful magic in words!

The first half says that the ‘*nāma sankīrthana*’ of Hari the Supreme destroys all sins. The *śloka* could have stopped with that. There is justification for it. But instead the second half speaks of the glory of *namaskāram* and completes it.

Prānāmō dukha samanah
‘Doing *namaskāram* to him destroys sorrow.
‘*Tham namāmi harim param*’
‘Therefore I do *namaskāram* to that Hari the Supreme’.

It may be asked whether sorrow will not go away if the sins go. If sins go one may lead an honest life according to the ways of dharma. But that by itself is not destruction of sorrow. What is the sorrow? It is that he has not become united with Him. Till such time the *Jīvā* does not join Him the *Jīvā* which got separated from him will have sorrow in the heart of hearts. Merely by living a virtuous life of morality and good conduct and according to the ways of dharma fullness cannot be found. If a sense of fullness is not there, there will be something wanting in which case it will be sorrow. That will not go till the *Jīvā* joins Him. *Namaskāram* alone can give that. This is what the *śloka* conveys.

It is only in *namaskāram* there is *saranāgathi*. That is why *Śukāchāryā* has accorded the highest place to it and concluded *Śrīmadh Bhāgavatham*.

The sins which we have committed in the form of various actions have to be destroyed by doing the act of *namaskāram*. It is only if the sins are got rid of like that the eagerness to join him will surge and we will develop the *jnāna* 'we cannot of our own join Him. He has to take us to Himself. That is His work. It is only if we do *saraṇāgathi* and remain in the state of no action He will do that act' and as our final action we will fall at His feet and remain actionless. This is the last *ślōka* of *Bhāgavatham*.

In the last *ślōka** of *Gītā*, *Bhagawān* who is the hero of *Bhāgavatham* tells Arjuna - that is all *jīvās* - to do *saraṇāgathi* and if *saraṇāgathi* is done :

Aham thvā sarva pāpēbhyō mōkshayishyāmi

(XVIII. 66)

'I will release you from all sins', He says. That is the '*sarvapāpa prañāśanam*' we have seen in *Bhāgavatham*.

(* Although there are some *ślōkas* after this, this is the *ślōka* where *Bhagawān*'s *upadēśam* ends)

Then comes *Bhagawān*'s auspicious (*mangala*) words:

'*Mā, Śuchah*'

'Do not have sorrow', He says. This is '*Dhukka samanam*' what we saw in *Bhāgavatham*.

When *Śukāchāryā* wanted to conclude *Bhāgavatham* also as '*Śaraṇāgathi sāsthrā*' he has mentioned *namaskāram* to indicate it.

Namaskāram (the true *namaskāram*) to *Bhagawān* gives fruit greater than which there is nothing - becoming united with *Bhagawān*.

* * *

NAMASKĀRAM IS USEFUL BY ITSELF

Doing *namaskāram* and seeking the fulfillment of some wish through that is itself foolish in a way because automatically it gives the great fruit of 'vinayam' (humility). That is the fruit - fortune, wealth and everything. *Āchāryā* too prayed to *Mahālakshmi* (*Kanakadhārā sthōthrām*) on behalf of a poor couple but, for himself, he says the greatest wealth is doing *namaskāram* to Her.

Thvadh vandhanāni māmēva mātharanisam kalayanthu

* * *

MANASKĀRAM

The great saint - composer of Carnatic Music, Sri Thyagaraja has sung 'I offer obeisance to all the great persons as many as they are'. Similarly all of you both men and women should do *namaskāram* to great persons.

Because I say this I do not mean that in crowded assemblies you should do *namaskāram*. It will be inconvenient to you and others. So you take it to mean that you have to do this keeping in mind the place, time, situation etc. When you are part of a crowd it is enough if you do *namaskāram* mentally. To compensate for not doing it physically you can do it mentally more deeply. This is making 'Manaskāram' of *Namaskāram*. In other places drop your body on the ground and do it.

* * *

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY - NOT AN END ITSELF

The reason why I dealt with the greatness of *namaskāram* in detail is that humility, politeness etc are on the decline. From the time the slogans of equality, freedom, self-respect etc started the great quality of humility has started suffering. It has led to

unreasonableness and insubordination. The demand for 'right' has become a fight. If we consider the society, economic prosperity etc the new ideologies are not without justification. I endorse it without any objection. But is there not a limit to everything? If the new ideologies are implemented without crossing that limit everything will be in its place, the present class conflicts will come down and peace, unity and mutual love will prevail in the world. How to limit it? It is possible only by increasing the wealth called humility.

Can mere economic prosperity give fullness to life? It cannot. It is only by limiting it by grace that the fullness of a complete life can be had. Humility is the way to get that grace. What is the way to get that humility? It is by going in search of great persons and doing *namaskāram* to them with the basic thought that we want it. This action by itself will raise into a big building what was 'basic' - what was below in the basement. Because of the special power of the tradition that has come down through ages however keen about self-respect one might be if he has a little mind to have it that 'basic' attitude will come. Even now that attitude has not completely disappeared. It is there at the bottom. This is the age of freedom in which 'each for himself as he likes' and no one is subordinate to another. But almost everyone seems to be going to some 'Swāmi' and falling at his feet. It is those who talk atheism and self-respect who do a lot of *namaskāram* to their leaders, praise them to the sky. Therefore it is the characteristic of this land that all those who are born in this soil have within them the taste for doing *namaskāram*. What needs to be done is that it should be channelised so that it is made to the right person. *Nārāyaṇā* alone has to show a way for it.

* * *

EXCEPTIONS*

(*This part was delivered by *Mahāswāmi* when he saw in the audience someone who could not bend and do *namaskāram* due to health problem).

When I have said how to do *namaskāram*, that it has so much meaning, it gives so much fruit etc those who have health problem and who cannot follow what I said need not strain themselves and do it. If they do it mentally it is enough. Their feeling that they are not able to physically do it will give them greater bhakthi than those who do *namsakāram* physically. For those who do it physically it becomes mechanical too. When an action is mechanical it means the body is involved in action and the mind may be elsewhere. When *namaskāram* itself is mental the mind has to be involved in it. I have said this to show that whatever be the rule there is exception for good reasons.

* * *

NAMASKĀRAM WHICH REMOVES DARKNESS

In our country where the important concern was about spiritual development, material advance has come to be considered as being everything. For the disease of ego which has led to this I have spoken of the remedy of *namaskāram*. Since *namaskāram* is the first step to get released from the darkness of '*samsāra*' I spoke about the former.

I have spoken about this in detail because I thought that more than anyone else if I say it, it will make a deep impression. When I say this do I have a feeling of ego? That is not the meaning. It is because of the consideration of 'status' all this talk of equality, freedom, self-respect has come up and it has become almost a war which is driving away the great quality of humility. In the circumstances if one who, by sheer accident, has been elevated to the high status, a status to which no other status is equal and no status that is higher - who does not find satisfaction in the thought

that he need not have to show respect to anyone else feels 'I have no chance to show respect to anyone else. What kind of life is this' and if the world knows this the need for humility will be felt deep in the mind. That is why I have said all this.

For you who have the good fortune of doing *namaskāram*, which I do not and cannot have, to use it well and attain 'sreyas' I too pray to that *Nārāyaṇa* saying '*Namo Namah*' and do *namaskāram* to him.

* * *

MANGAḲĀRATHTHI



HANUMĀN THE JNĀNI AND HIS JNĀNA GURU

*Athuliththa bhaladhāmam swarnā sailābhadhēham
Dhanuja vana kruśānum jnānināmagra gaṇyam
Sakala guṇa nidhānam vanarāṇāmadhīṣam
Raghupathi varadhūtham vāthajātham namāmi*

This is the *ślōka* about *Ānjanēyaswāmi*. The great Rama bhaktha, Thulsidasa's Rama Charitha *Mānas* or Rama Charith *Manas* in Hindi is famous all over the North. People there consider it worthy of *pūjā* and do *pārāyaṇa* more than what we do with *Kambha Rāmāyaṇam* (Tamil). It was written about 350-400 years back. Hindi language which is not a old language like Tamil has gained literary status on account of this *Rāmāyaṇam*. Although it has gained literary status, looked at from the point of view of grammar it is not in the language of poets. Thulsidas has written in a language which can be read and enjoyed even by ordinary people. That is why it is more popular among pandits, as well as common people in the North than *Kambha Rāmāyaṇam* in the South. Although it has both bhakthi and poetic beauty it is the power of bhakthi which touches the people more.

It is a book written during the Muslim rule when Hindus were being forced to convert. If the Hindus had stuck to their religion despite compulsion the bhakthi and religious feelings infused by Thulsi *Rāmāyaṇam* are important reasons. The exploits of Anjaneya described in this infused into the people the attitude of not bowing down under any compulsion. Thulsidas himself has written a separate section on *Ānjanēya - Hanumān Chālīsā* - of 40 *ślōkas* - showing to people that *Ānjanēya* as armour is always there for their protection. That *sthōthrā* has the quality of attracting

anyone to read and memorise it. Even a very weak person when he reads it will get the enthusiasm that by *Ānjanēya śakthi* he too has become strong. That *sthōthrā* too became popular during his lifetime and served as a protective fencing against conversion.

It is not that Thulsidas wrote it out of his imagination but he was the direct recipient of *Ānjanēya*'s supreme grace. If we read his life history we will know how he had moved closely and face to face with *Ānjanēya*. He himself used to be called an aspect (amśa) of *Ānjanēya*. He too was born under the star 'Mūlam' like *Ānjanēya*.

The *Ānjanēya sthōthrā* mentioned in the beginning was composed by such a Thulsidas. It is a *ślōka* that is devoted to *Ānjanēya* as part of the *Mangala Ślōkam* of his *Sundara kāṇḍam*. Although the story is in Hindi the *Mangala Ślōkas* are all in Sanskrit as the one mentioned in the beginning.

The *ślōka* concludes with *namaskāram* by saying 'Vāthajātham Namāmi'. *Vāthajātham* is the name of *Ānjanēya* in this *ślōka*. *Vāthajāthan* means Vāyu Puthra. *Ānjanēya* has also the name *Vathāthmāja* which also has the same meaning.

The reason why I have mentioned this *ślōka* is that the two phrases '*Jnāninām agragānyam*' - come in it. It means he is considered the first among the *jnānis*. The *ślōka* says that among the *Brahma Jnānis* and *Āthma Jnānis* *Ānjanēya* occupies the first place.

Generally, what are said to be the great qualities of *Ānjanēya* are : 'His strength - bodily strength, valour, daring, skill, sharp intellect, particularly mastery over grammar, unsullied *brahmacharyam*, dedicating all these for the sake of dharma and the pleasure of the Lord. More than anything else he melted in Rama bhakthi and remained with utter humility as the servant of the servants of Rama. Due to his physical strength, skill in doing

things, total and unshakeable involvement in the work to be done we have known him as a *karma yōgi* and by his Rama bhakthi we have known him as a great bhakthi yōgi. But many of us have not known him as a jnāna yōgi.

He was highly intellectual, he is described as '*Buddhimathām varishtam*'. But buddhi is different from jnāna. We have many who are intellectually great in many fields. But can we call all of them jnānis? Jnāni is one who has gained as experience the knowledge that Brahman, the *Paramāthmā* and he, the *Jivāthmā* are one - called *Brahma Jnāni* and *Āthma jnāni*. But to attain that knowledge a lot of philosophical *sāsthrās* have to be studied and understood. Therefore buddhi also is necessary here. But buddhi must engage itself only in matters spiritual. Mostly those who are intellectuals do not engage themselves in the analysis of metaphysics and philosophy but in other subjects. Even if they do philosophical research it will be merely intellectual exercise. If it is merely the analysis with the brain which is not combined with the desire for experiencing the unity of *Paramāthmā-Jivāthmā* it is of no use. Neither is it jnana. Even if he is highly intellectual he is far from a jnāni.

Ānjanēya who is '*Buddhimathām varishtam*' is different from other intellectuals. He has understood and experienced the ultimate import of *Vedānta*. He is qualified to be considered first among such persons. Thulsidas who knew him face to face says '*Jnāninamagraganyan*'.

Since Thulsidas has mentioned in the *ślōka* the aspects of *Ānjanēya*'s greatness the world knows and has also added that he is first among the jnānis that must be absolutely true.

What are those other great qualities? It is speaking of *Anjaneya*'s physical strength starting with '*Athulitha bhaladhāmam*'. '*Athulitha bhaladhāmam*' means one who is the

repository of unequalled strength'. He says that his body is huge and shining like the Golden Mount Meru. The golden colour is the result of 'thējas' acquired by his *brahmacharyam* (celibacy). Next he says '*Dhanuja vana kruśānum*'. He was the fire like a forest fire and reduced to ashes the 'forest' of the *rākshasa* clan. It is after mentioning his capability in the world of activities Thulsidas goes to the 'jnana loka' and says '*Jnāninam agragaṇyam*'.

Then he talks of the speciality of his mind : 'Sakala guṇa nidhānam' - it means that he was the treasure house of all the good qualities. We can take it that his sharp intellect is one of them. Then he says that he who had earned the name of Ramadasa was the Lord of the monkeys and kept them under his control, the monkeys which cannot be easily controlled. By saying this in the figurative way Thulsidas makes it known that he was a Jitendriya *Brahmachāri* who had controlled the monkey of the mind.

At the end he says what comes to our mind the moment the name of *Ānjanēya* is mentioned - 'Raghupathi Varadhūtam' - *Rāmachandramūrthi*'s meritorious envoy.

Instead of *Varadhūta* there is a version 'Priya bhaktha'. He is Priya bhaktha in both ways - he was the bhaktha who was the recipient of Raghupathi's Priyam (love) and bhaktha who had great priyam for Raghupathi.

After saying all this about *Ānjanēya*, Thulsidas finally says '*Vāthajātham*' at the place where he has to identify the person and says '*Namāmi*' - I pay obeisance to him - and concludes the *śloka*.

In these we are concerned here with *Jnāninam Agragaṇyar* which tells us that *Ānjanēya Swāmi* is to be respected by being given the first place among *Brahma Jnānis*. Thulsidas who had actually moved with him, even when mentioning the qualities which we know has referred to this greatness as the central gem.

When it is said that *Ānjanēya* is a *Brahma Jnāni* a question will arise in our *Vēdhic* tradition. According to our traditions evolved by those who had spiritual experience, if one has attained *Brahma Jnānam* he could not have had it on his own. He could have gained it only by having *upadēsam* from a guru and by the power of the guru's grace. Although a *śishya* who receives *upadesam* has to make efforts and do *sādhana*, it is 'śravaṇam', the *upadēsam* from the guru which precedes all that. The sequence is *srāvaṇa*-*manana*-*nidhidhyāsanam*. *Śravaṇam* : Receiving the *upadēsam* from the guru. *Mananam* : the *śishya* to go on memorizing it; *Nidhidhyasanam* : becoming engrossed in *dhyāna* and experiencing what has been memorized. Therefore if it is said that one attains *jnana* the next question is from whom did he have *srāvaṇam*, who is the guru who gave him *upadēsam*. Who is the *jnanāchāryā* who have *upadēsam* to *Ānjanēya*?

You must have heard stories that in his younger years *Sūrya Bhagawān* as guru gave him *upadēsam*. As soon as *Ānjanēya* was born he looked at the Sun and thought that it was a red fruit and made one jump towards it. A few years later he became *śishya* to *Sūrya Bhagawān* and learnt lessons from him. From *Udayagiri* to *Asthamanagiri* he went with *Sūrya Bhagawān* facing him as a *śishya* and learnt his lessons. But that was not about *jnana*. It was not about spiritual experience but lessons pertaining to all other *sāsthrās* which are learnt with the intellect. Particularly the *upadēsam* was about grammar (*vyākaraṇam*). That is how he got the pride of place, among intellectuals as 'Buddhimathām varishtam'. But an intellectual is different from a *jnāni*. When did he become a *jnāni*? Who was the guru who made him a *jnāni*?

It is only *Āthmā* which is called 'Para vidhyā'. All other *sāsthrās* are 'Apara Vidhyā' only. 'Para' means what is superior and 'apara' means what is inferior. *Ānjanēya* received

jnānōpadēśam after the *Rāmāyaṇā* story was almost over and Rama's coronation had taken place.

Ānjanēya had grown up and had done all the great deeds which we celebrate as '*Ānjanēya* Prabhāvam' as service to Rama. It was only after *Rāvaṇa* was killed and Rama was ruling in Ayodhya as Chakravarthi when *Ānjanēya* dedicated himself entirely to Rama's service that he received *jnānōpadēśam*. Since he devoted himself wholly to the service of *Rāmā* he could not have gone anywhere and received *upadēśam* from someone else. It was indeed Rama who gave Brahma Vidhyā *upadēśam* to *Ānjanēya*.

Generally, we look at Rama and *Ānjanēya* as Prabhu-Sēvak (the Lord and the servant) and *Bhagawān*-bhaktha. But here we see them as Guru-*śishya*. There is nothing to equal the relationship between a sadhguru and *sadhsishya*. *Ānjanēya* was a great sadhpurusha. *Rāmā* was the very 'Sath' the *Paramāthmā*. Even thinking of their having been Guru and *śishya* is great *puṇyam*.

On the one side Rama as *Rājārām*, as Chakravarthi, was ruling according to dharma. On the other he was also a '*Jnāna Raja*' and was giving '*Āthmōpadēśam*'. Janaka was also like that - a king and a rishi at one and the same time and he had also made commentary on *Vēdānthā*.

Rama gave upadesam not only to *Ānjanēya* but to all the rishis. The rishis knew that Rama was the avathār of *Nārāyaṇā*. They knew that he had taken the avathar only to kill *Rāvaṇa* and the other *rākshasās* who were harassing them. That job was over and Rama started ruling. Through his rule based on dharma he was showing the way of dharma to the people. That is also one of the purposes of his *avathāra*. The rishis added to that a third function.

There are two - '*pūrvāṅgam*' and '*uththarāṅgam*'. *Pūrvāṅgam* is what is to be done first. *Uththarāṅgam* is what is to be done later. Based on these two, in Vaidhika sampradhāyam

(*Vēdhic* tradition) it has been laid down that by leading life on the right lines in this world and knowing what is dharma and practicing it in order to attain the maturity to make efforts to go to the other world, those who have attained that maturity should realize and experience the Brahman which is beyond dharma and adharma. We have been given six *śāstrās* called '*Shad dharśanam*'. Of these, *Pūrva Mīmāṃsa* is to involve us in dharma - we have to have the desire to know dharma, '*dharma jijñāsā*'. *Uththara Mīmāṃsa* is to involve us in Brahman when we have a desire to know the Brahman, '*Brahma Jijñāsā*'. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsa* got the name *Mīmāṃsa* and *Uththara Mīmāṃsa* got the name *Vēdānta*. *Mīmāṃsa* deals with *karmās* to be performed. *Vēdānta* which is the path to realize the Brahman deals with *jñāna*.

After the first purpose of the *avatharā* was over Rama became Chakravarthi and carried out the second function of showing to his subjects the ways of dharma by his just rule and by his *Vēdhic karmānushtāna*. The rishis wanted that he should make them firm in the *jñāna mārga* and therefore went to him.

The rishis who were capable of knowing whatever is deepest in the minds of others knew that Rama was a great jnani though he behaved as a human being on several occasions. Therefore they thought that even though they had received *upadēsam* and had the supreme experience, only if they received *upadēsam* from Rama who was *Bhagawān* and Brahman, their experience would become stable and they would attain '*Jīvan Mukthi*'.

Rama also was willing to give *upadēsam*. Those who have acquired *Brahma Vidhyā* and attained Supreme Bliss will like to share it with others. Rama was the very form of *Brahma Vidhyā*. He had no need to learn it from anyone. Since he had to behave as a human being during *avathāram* he showed that he learnt *Brahma Vidhyā* through a guru, in order to show the right path to the people. Even as a young prince when he learnt all the *vidhyās*

including Dhanur Vēdham from Vasishtha he had learned the fundamentals of *Vēdāntha*. But his thirst for jnāna was not quenched. Therefore he had detailed *Brahma Vidhyā upadēsam* from Vasishtha. That *upadēsam* is a big book and is a classic which can be said to be an authority on Adhvaitha *Vēdāntha*. It is called *Yōga Vāsishtham*. It is more appropriate to call it a book of jnana and not *yōgā*. All the *sāadhanā mārgas* - spiritual endeavours - are usually called '*yōgā*' - *karmā yoga*, *bhakthi yōgā*, *jnana yoga*. But generally speaking *yōgā* means the *ashtāṅga yōgā* of Pathanjali. But this book is meant for making spiritual endeavour to attain *Adhvaitha jnāna*.

The rule is that one who learns a vidhya should teach it to others. Apart from the rule, such a person himself will be eager to pass on the *vidhyā* to others and derive happiness from it. Rama also had the same feeling. But he had suppressed the desire till *Rāvaṇa* was killed. When that was over, desire arose in a big way and the rishis also came to him. But he was the very form of humility. He thought when it was not proper for a kshatriya like him to give upadesam to the great Brahmin rishis who were older than him. He thought that he should tell them the *Brahma vidhya* but at the same time he should not give *upadēsam* directly.

At that stage he thought 'Here is *Ānjanēya*. He has fully controlled his indriyas and has made total surrender to me and has no life of his own. Such a person will attain mōksham even if he does not know anything about jnāna. Yet let him also know jnana, jnana marga and *jnānōpadēsam*. He has attained maturity to delve into philosophy. We cannot get a better *śishya*. Therefore let us keep him before us and make it appear that we are giving *upadēsam* to him only. Let the rishis who are gathered also listen to it'.

In his younger days *Ānjanēya* had *Sūrya Bhagawān* as *Āchāryā* for '*Apara Vidhyā*'. When he became old Rama who was the jewel of the Solar dynasty became his *āchāryā* for *Para vidhyā*.

It was Rama (as *Vishṇu*) who had given upadesam of Para vidhyā to the Sun God. *Krishṇa Paramāthmā* has referred to this in the Gita :

‘Imam vivasvathē yōgam prōkthavānaham avyayam’

(IV.1)

‘Arjuna! The *upadēsam* which I am giving you now I have given to *Vivasvān* in ancient times’.

A cow gives milk to several people. For this it must have its own calf which it can suckle. It is the same with the milk of *upadēsam*. Although it is meant for all those who are qualified to receive it, it will be what a guru gives as *upadēsam* keeping in view a particular *śishya*. There is such a comparison in one of the *dhyāna ślōkas* of Gītā : ‘The shepherd *Krishṇā* made all the Upanishads into a cow. He milked that cow and gave it as *Gītōpadēsam*. By virtue of the greatness of his hand the cow’s milk became amruth which gives immortality. All those who have the right knowledge are qualified to drink it. As a representative of theirs it was Arjuna who was the calf that was suckled.

Sarvōpanishadhō ghavō dhogdhā Gōpālānandanah

Pārtho vathsah sudhīr bhōkthā dugdham Gīthāmṛutham mahath

Arjuna who was an intimate friend of *Krishṇā* became his *śishya* when *Krishṇā* took the form of *Jñānāchāryā*. For Rama, his great servant became his *śishya*. Later, *Ānjanēya* occupied a place in Arjuna’s flag and made him a victor true to his name ‘Vijayan’.

Just as *Krishṇā* gave upadesam which was meant for all deserving persons but keeping Arjuna before him, just as *Dakshinamurthi* gave upadesam keeping Sanaka and others Rama gave *upadēsam* to *Ānjanēya* which was meant also for the rishis who had assembled there.

Rama also showed ‘Chin mudhra’ like *Dakshīnāmūrthi*. Like him too he would sit with one leg folded and another leg hanging

down. This is called 'Vīrāsanam'. In old paintings he would have been depicted like that.

There is a *dhyāna ślōka* which is recited when doing japa of Rama nama.

*Kālāmbhōdhara kānthi kāntham anīṣam vīrasanādhyāsinam
Mudhrām jnāna mayīm dhadhānam aparam hasthāmbujam jānuni*

The meaning is : 'The Swāmi who is of the colour of rain-bearing cloud is sitting in vīrasanam; his one hand shows chin mudhrā. Another hand is on the knee'.

There is another *ślōka* which is a *dhyana ślōka* of Rama and is part of the 'Mangala ślōkam' recited at the beginning of *Rāmāyaṇā Pārāyanam*. The fact that Rama is sitting in *vīrāsanam* is mentioned in it. There is no mention in it about Chin mudhrā. But it is in this *ślōka* that it is clearly said that he gave *Jnānōpadēśam* to rishis keeping *Ānjanēya* before him.

*Vaidhēhī sahitham suradhrumathalē hymē mahā mandapē
Madhyē pushpakamāsanē maṇimayē vīrāsanē samsthitham
Agrē vāchayathi prabhanjana suthē thathvam munibhyah param
Vyākyaṇtham Bharathādhibhih parivrutham Ramam bhajā syāmaḷam*

Although he was sitting on *vīrāsana* like *Dakshināmūrthi* and was giving upadesam of *Vēdānta*, he was not single like *Dakshināmūrthi*. He was king and rishi at the same time and was engaged both in *Karmayōgam* and *Jnānayogam* and was seated in the golden mandap along with his queen. That is what is meant by 'Vaidhēhī sahitham'. Since Sita was born in the Vidhēha kingdom she was called *Vaidhēhī*. In the *ślōka* that speaks of Rama as *Jnānāchārya* her name has not been mentioned as Sita or Janaki but as *Vaidhēhī* which has a lot of meaning. Vaidhehi can be understood to mean one who has given up the body that is not having the awareness of the body but being 'Āthma swarūpam'. That is, she was the personification of the philosophy which Rama

was giving as *upadēsam*. Putting it differently it can be said that Rama was giving upadesam of the truth which she personified.

Sita is by the side of Rama. Around him are Bharatha, Lakshmana and Śathrugna. The last line of the *ślōka* says this - *Bharathādhībhih parivrutham Ramam bhajē syāmaḷam*.

His younger brothers and he were so close to each other. But when he gave *upadēsam* he did not give it to them directly. He thought that only Ānjanēya should be his direct *śishya* and gave him that good fortune. That is what is indicated by '*Agrē vāchayathi prabhanjana suthē thathvam*'.

Prapanjanan is one of the names of Vāyu. Therefore *Prapanjana Suthā* is Vayu's son. 'Agre' means 'before, in the front'. He sits before Rama in all humility and listens to the *upadēsam*.

Although Rama was giving the *upadēsam* looking at Ānjanēya he had in view all the rishis who had assembled there - '*thathvam munibhyah param*'. It means that Rama gave upadesam of Para vidhyā to the rishis.

There is a rare book on Adhvaitha in Telugu called '*Sita Rama Ānjanēyam*' in which it is said that not only Rama but Sita also gave *upadēsam* to Ānjanēya. This book is something special. Normally there are no original works in the regional languages on Adhvaitha. Mostly they are the translations of the Sanskrit original. What is said in this is that *Vaidhēhī* who was a jnani and who had lost the awareness of her body also gives *upadēsam* to Ānjanēya. She gives the *upadēsam* first of Sri Rama *Thāraka Manthra*. Is it not great fortune to receive upadesam of Rama manthra from Sita who was the very life of Rama? After her *upadēsam* Rama gives *upadēsam* of *Saṅkya yōgam* and *Amanaska yōgam* which are all Adhvaitha. This upadesam has been given in detail in that book.

In the relation of the Lord and servant between Sita-Rama-*Ānjanēya*, however much they may give him that was not adequate. Nor was *Ānjanēya* who was highly discriminating (*viveki*) in need of it. He got full satisfaction in rendering service to them. But Sita and Rama were not satisfied. Therefore they decided to give him their wealth of *jnāna* which will not get reduced however much it is given and therefore gave him *upadēsam*. They were the World Mother and World Father. But, to *Ānjanēya*, they became Guru also. They became *Mathā*, *Pithā*, Guru and Deivam to *Ānjanēya*. *Ānjanēya* had this unique fortune. More than what is said in any text if something is said in the Upanishad which is like the head of the *Vēdhās* it carries special weight. Out of the 108 upanishads the last one *Mukthikōpanishad* is what Rama gave as upadesam to *Ānjanēya*.

When the name itself is *Mukthikōpanishad* its contents must be the essence of *Adhvaitha*. That is how *Rāmachandramūrthi* gave upadesam.

In the beginning of that Upanishad it is said that in the big assembly of rishis, *Ānjanēya* only had the good fortune of receiving *upadēsam* directly. It is also said that Sanaka and others who had received *upadēsam* from *Dakshināmūrthi* were also present there.

The Upanishad says that *Ānjanēya* asked more and more questions and received the milk of *jnāna*. He requested Rama thus, 'Rama, the very form of Sachithananda! Desirous of having mukthi I want to know your '*Thathva swarūpam*'. Tell me that and make me muktha' and thus made him give the *upadēsam*.

In that Upanishad it is not only '*Thathva upadēsam*' which is there. In the first chapter, Rama, as requested by *Ānjanēya*, mentions the names of the 108 upanishads. He also tells him which Upanishad belongs to which *Vēdhā*, when doing *adhyayana* which

Śānthy Manthra should be recited etc. As a prelude to this he tells him the number of *Vēdhās* and branches (*śākās*) in each. That Upanishad is like a ready-reckoner for the 108 upanishads.

It is not only Rama, the '*Maryādhā Purusha*' who shows the way for ideal living but also *Ānjanēyā*. We have to think of him as guru for all his qualities and follow his ways. Thulsidas describes him as '*Sakala guṇa nidhānam*'. True to this he had all the great qualities. But he thought that the greatest thing above all these is *jnāna* and took *upadēśam* from Rama and taught us a lesson in this also. The lesson is that although in our worldly life our goal is to attain the wealth of dharma and protect it we should have the thought even then that for the redemption of the soul we have to attain the wealth of *jnāna*.

He, who as the guru, shows us the way in regard to several things was a *śishya* himself so that we will remain *śishyas* throughout our life and continue to learn. If we meditate on *Ānjanēya*, the guru who is also *śishya* and *Rāmachandramūrthi* who gave him *upadēśam* as guru it is enough. We can always move on the right path and be the recipients of all that is good.

* * *

